



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 23, 1987

N-SSB

87-159

Consulting Editors Approved
For New Bible Commentary

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE (BP)--A slate of six consulting editors and two alternates for a new conservative, multi-volume Bible commentary was approved without opposition during a called meeting of the trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board Oct. 22.

After 25 minutes of discussion, trustees approved in a voice vote the slate presented by the administration. Three consulting editors will work with the Old Testament portion of the commentary and three with the New Testament, along with one alternate for each testament who would serve if an editor could not complete the assignment.

The commentary, to be written by biblical inerrantists, was approved by the trustees in February 1987, with the first volume expected to be released in 1991.

In the motion which instructed the board to proceed with a new conservative commentary. "with haste," trustees were specific in their instructions about the content, saying the multi-volume work "is to reflect a strong scholarly defense of the traditional authorship of the biblical books, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and a presentation of an apologetic for creationism in the introduction to Genesis."

Trustees also said: "All authors involved in the writing of this commentary should hold to the position of inerrancy."

At their August 1987 meeting, trustees reserved the right to approve consulting editors for the project and named Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, Texas, as the first of six.

Patterson, 45, will serve on the New Testament team. He holds a bachelor's degree from Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, and a master's and doctorate in theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as managing editor of the Criswell Study Bible.

Other consulting editors for the New Testament are Robert Sloan, associate professor of religion at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, and Curtis Vaughan, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. The alternate editor for the New Testament is Richard R. Melick Jr., professor and chairman of the New Testament and Greek departments at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn.

Sloan, 38, holds a bachelor of arts degree from Baylor, master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J., and a doctorate in theology from the University of Basel, Switzerland. He is a contributor to the Laymen's Bible Dictionary to be released in 1988 by the Holman division of the board.

Vaughan, 62, has taught at Southwestern since 1950 and was a general editor for The New Testament from 26 Translations. He is a graduate of Union University, Jackson, Tenn., and holds a bachelor of divinity and doctorate in theology from Southwestern.

Melick, 42, has taught at Mid-America since 1980 and was co-editor and contributor to a book on the Baptist perspective of authority and interpretation. He has a bachelor's degree from Columbia Bible College, master of divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., and a doctorate in theology from Southwestern.

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Consulting editors for the Old Testament are L. Russ Bush III, associate professor of philosophy of religion at Southwestern, Kenneth Mathews, professor of Old Testament and Semitics, Criswell College, and Larry L. Walker, professor of Old Testament and Semitic languages at Mid-America. The alternate is Duane A. Garrett, assistant professor of Old Testament at Mid-America.

Bush, 42, holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College, Clinton, and a master's and doctorate in theology from Southwestern. He is co-author of "Baptists and the Bible."

Mathews, 37, is managing editor of the Criswell Theological Review. He has a bachelor's degree from Dallas Baptist University and a master's and doctorate from the University of Michigan.

Walker, 55, taught at Southwestern Seminary 15 years until he joined the Mid-America faculty in 1980 and has been a contributor to three Bible dictionaries and two Bible encyclopedias. He has a bachelor's degree from Bob Jones University, bachelor of divinity from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, master of arts from Wheaton College and a doctorate from Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning.

Garrett, 34, was a Southern Baptist missionary to Korea five years and co-edited with Melick a book on authority and interpretation. He has a bachelor's degree from Rice University in Houston, master of divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a doctorate in religion from Baylor.

James Clark, senior vice president for publishing and distribution, said more than 20 nominees for consulting editors came from trustees and an advisory group including SBC President Adrian Rogers and nine former convention presidents.

"We tried to choose scholars representing a balance of skills needed to do the work," said Clark. Balance was sought in linguistic skills, biblical expertise, scholarship assignment and editorial skills.

Clark said Michael Smith, general editor for the commentary and chief editor of general religious books in the Broadman products department, interviewed many whose names were suggested concerning their commitment to the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy and the place of the Bible in their lives.

Clark said the consulting editors will recommend writers and suggest possible names for the commentary in addition to editing the material. All three editors on each team will read all of the material related to the Old or New Testament.

Bill Tisdale, pastor of First Baptist Church of Henderson, Texas, asked whether eschatological views (concerning the end of time and the second coming of Christ) were considered in selecting consulting editors.

Dean Mathis, pastor of Taylor Memorial Baptist Church of Hobbs, N.M., and a member of the Broadman Committee which unanimously recommended the editors to the full board, said he believes the editing process and the editors' mutual respect for each other will enable them to be fair to differing views.

Other questions from trustees concerned writers and the process for naming the commentary.

A total of 62 trustees on the 85-member board attended the meeting which was the third called meeting of the full trustee board in the last 35 years. Others were held in 1954 and 1977.

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Market's Bearclaws Fail
To Shred Baptist Funds

By Marv Knox

N-CD
Baptist Press
10/23/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--The stock market's record 508-point crash Oct. 19 failed to inflict significant wounds on Southern Baptist Convention investments, fund managers reported in the aftermath "Black Monday."

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"The danger is past; we're still positive about the outlook of the economy through the middle of the next decade," said Hollis Johnson, president of the Southern Baptist Foundation. Johnson and other SBC fund managers commented on the market's erratic behavior later in the week, after it had begun to recuperate from its Black Monday loss.

"We're investors, not traders or speculators," said Johnson, reflecting an opinion of his colleagues. "We're still long-term oriented. We're not going to lose sight of long-term goals because of a short-term loss."

SBC fund managers operate with dual goals -- stable growth and security. That philosophy left Southern Baptist money in relatively good shape. Money managers from across the convention described their situations:

-- Assets of the SBC Annuity Board, which manages the pension funds for the denomination's ministers, remain in "excellent condition," AB President Darold H. Morgan reported.

"Every annuitant now receiving benefits will continue to receive benefits exactly according to our contract of settlement," Morgan said. "There is no danger to these benefits now, and we see none in the future."

"A retirement plan is a long-term plan," added Harold Richardson, the board's senior vice president for investments, addressing fears concerning the market's short-term losses. "Sudden economic shifts -- up or down -- are smoothed out over time unless one makes a speculative decision and begins moving money around in panic."

Annuitants with money invested in the board's Variable Fund, which primarily is composed of common stocks, were most vulnerable to the crash. But Richardson cautioned against panic:

"Paper losses are not necessarily actual losses. Moving money ... at a low point is a certain way to lose. It is now too late to make that move. Over time, these values have always gone up."

Annuitants with money in the board's other funds were more secure.

"Money contributed to the Fixed Fund or the Short-Term Fund is never invested in stocks," Richardson said. "The Fixed Fund will credit 9.5 percent annual earnings on contributions and accumulations in 1987. The Short-Term Fund pays a variable interest rate dependent on the money market rate."

And the Balanced Fund, with less than half its assets in stocks, "will suffer less paper losses than the Variable Fund," Richardson said. The strong bond market, which "balances" the stocks in this fund, should offset some of the losses incurred by the stocks, he added.

"We are here for the long term," Morgan stressed. "We expect recovery. In the meantime, there is no threat to income being received by our annuitants."

-- The SBC Sunday School Board was able to "avoid a significant part of the market downturn" in its retirement trust fund and reserve funds, said E.V. King, vice president for business and finance.

"We moved a lot of our resources before Black Monday into cash or fixed-income resources," King said, noting action was based on advice of outside money managers and the board's analysis.

As a result, the board's reserves and retirement funds dropped only 8.9 percent the week following Oct. 15, compared to the Standard & Poor 500's drop of 26.2 percent.

"Now our position is to sit in the bleachers and closely observe the game," King said. He noted the board will continue to try to preserve the capital gains it enjoyed during the market's recent growth.

-- SBC Foreign Mission Board officials said they were pleased the board's "deliberately conservative" investment policy held up well.

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Less than one-quarter of FMB funds are in stocks, said President R. Keith Parks. And since funds from temporary cash flow are the largest sources of investable money, more than 50 percent of FMB investment assets are in money market securities, unaffected by the market drop.

The market value of the board's common stock portfolio did drop, noted Carl Johnson, FMB vice president for finance. However, the portfolio's decline was "much smaller overall" than the market loss. And since the board's common stock holdings are for long-term investment, the board will not be forced to sell any securities because of the market decline, he added.

-- The SBC Home Mission board received minimal impact from the market, officials said.

"Less than 1 percent of our total investment is in an equity market where we depend upon the income to support our basic budget," said Controller Van Nichols.

The HMB church loans division's funds are invested either in certificates of deposit or government securities, reported division Director Robert L. Kilgore. No money for church loans is invested in stocks, he said.

-- The same is true for the Texas Baptist Church Loan Corporation, said President Bruce W. Bowles. Loans are generated from commercial sources such as banks, savings and loan companies and insurance firms, he said, adding the corporation owns no stocks.

"The only impact on us will be when interest rates change," Bowles reported. He noted some banks already have lowered the prime rate.

-- About one-fourth of the Florida Baptist Foundation's \$8 million in assets was invested in stocks when the market crashed, said George Borders, executive secretary-treasurer of the foundation. "We will experience some loss, but it's not going to be traumatic," he reported.

None of the foundation's \$2 million worth of stocks was sold during the panic "because they are quality stocks," Borders said. Although they initially lost value, they rebounded later in the week.

Meanwhile, when the market dropped, the foundation bought low-priced stocks that now are appreciating and will help recover some of the loss, he said. "A month from now, we are going to be ahead of where we were before last Monday," he predicted.

-- The market crash's impact was minimal on the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, said President Harry Trulove. That is because of the foundation's emphasis on income, he said, explaining the foundation does not distribute capital gains but simply reinvests gains that are made.

"Here in Arkansas, our portfolio is managed primarily for income," he said. "This will minimize the negative effect of the slide in the stock market."

-- The Southern Baptist Foundation had \$16 million of its \$61.4 million asset base in stocks on Black Monday, Johnson said. The balance, in fixed-income securities, short-term funds and other investments, helped to stabilize the assets, he said, noting some of that balance actually gained because of increases in the bond market.

The foundation manages invested funds for Southern Baptist institutions and state Baptist conventions. None of those groups that own stocks lost money below the price at which they bought the stocks, Johnson reported.

He also predicted the crash may have long-term benefits by making market participants more cautious and by forcing the president and Congress to work on eliminating the federal deficit.

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Dallas Baptist President
Marvin Watson Resigns

By Toby Druin

N-10
(Texas Std.)

Baptist Press
10/23/87

DALLAS (BP)--W. Marvin Watson Jr., bowed to a year of mounting pressure and resigned Oct. 21 as president of Dallas Baptist University during a special called meeting of trustees.

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The resignation will be effective almost immediately, Watson told the Baptist Standard, although he told the trustees he will take a few days "cleaning out my desk."

After an executive session where trustees discussed the resignation for more than an hour, trustee Frank Monroe of Dallas said the trustees had accepted it and had named Jerry F. Dawson, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Education Coordinating Board as interim chief executive officer of the institution.

The 63-year-old Watson, who came to the beleaguered school in 1979 and led it from the brink of financial disaster, told the trustees in the called meeting that he has "been charged with everything except murder" and that there are certain people on campus, faculty and deans alike, that believe that I should leave."

"You cannot have a divided institution," he said. "There is no reason to think that they're going to leave, so we (he and his wife, Marion) have decided it is much easier for us to leave."

He said he had given Monroe a letter of resignation July 1, but the chairman had declined to act on it at the time. Watson also noted that on at least two other occasions he had asked the trustees to begin to seek his successor.

Watson's autocratic management style has long kept him at odds with the faculty. But about a year ago, one faculty member, James Parker, wrote to the trustees protesting the school's involvement with the Napoleon Hill Foundation, claiming the founder's views were contradictory to DBU's statement of faith. The DBU's-Hill link was subsequently dropped.

Parker also charged that new faculty and staff were required by Watson to give 5 percent of their salary back to the university. That faculty and staff were required to sign up for "phantom courses" which they did not attend, but were designed to inflate the school's enrollment figure to increase Cooperative Program allocations; and that faculty and staff member's salaries were cut if there were not enough students to give them a full teaching load. A special committee of the trustees was named to study the charges. Parker's contract was not renewed for the current school year.

Over the last year, several anonymous letters had been written to trustees, to the Dallas media and others. Two weeks ago a four-page single-spaced letter, outlining various charges against Watson, was sent to the Baptist Standard and the trustees. An ad hoc group of the Dallas Baptist Association has met with Watson during the year about the charges and reportedly a group of faculty members recently hired a private investigator to probe the main matter.

Watson, in his remarks to the trustees, referred to a "ream" of materials the trustees had been sent over the last year. "It gets awfully tiresome," he said, "regarding the charges."

He noted that he and Mrs. Watson had committed \$1.8 million to DBU and will continue to support the school as long as it champions biblical inerrancy and the free enterprise system.

"Marion and I will continue to support Dallas Baptist University with friends, freshman and funds," Watson said. "For we believe DBU's mission is correct."

Watson became president in September 1979. He previously had been associated with Lone Star Steel Company, worked in the Lyndon B. Johnson administration as Postmaster General of the United States and had been a vice president of Occidental Petroleum Corporation before coming to DBU.

He noted in his presentation to the trustees that the debit of the university had been reduced from \$6.5 million to \$3.5 million during his tenure, that operating funds had gone from a \$1.1 million deficit to a \$1.3 million surplus, that assets had doubled to \$25.2 million, endowment had increased from \$2.4 million to \$9.3 million, and enrollment had risen from 961 students to a total of 1,866 this fall.

W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, a trustee when the school was moved to Dallas from Decatur in 1965, and a trustee most of the years since, credited Watson with "raising the school from the dead."

In comments made before the board went into executive session Criswell said the school was so "dead" before Watson came as president that he had offered to take it over himself.

"Because of the rebellion against the thought that I would possess it on the part of some national leaders," he said, "they got to work and in retaliation made the money to make it (DBU) revivable." The Texas Baptist executive board approved \$2.5 million gift/loan package for DBU in 1982.

Criswell said to Watson, "It was you that brought this institution to life, to viability, to strength ... you did it."

He said that if Watson were to leave, he would want to "quit" and asked the college president if he were resigning because he wanted to resign or because of all "the stuff" he had been charged with over the last year.

Watson urged Criswell and others to remain and later told the Standard there was no single offense that had brought the matter to a climax, but that he and his wife had prayed about the main matter and did not want to do the school harm.

"If we are a burr under somebody's blanket, there's no use being that," he said.

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Houston Baptists Oppose
Endorsement Of Candidates

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

Baptist Press
10/23/87

DALLAS (BP)--In response to the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee's recent endorsement of Robert Bork for Supreme Court Justice, Houston-area Baptists approved a resolution affirming the "historic tradition of non-endorsement" of political candidates and judicial nominees by Baptist churches and denominational entities.

In spite of a failed attempt to table the matter and a question of parliamentary procedure, the resolution was approved 106-60 at the 147th annual meeting of Union Baptist Association at Westbury Baptist Church in Houston.

The resolution was submitted by John Leland Berg, pastor of West Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, was the fifth and final resolution approved at the meeting of the largest association in the Southern Baptist Convention, with 390 congregations and more than 250,000 members.

Other resolutions expressed appreciation to the host church; noted concern about the initial refusal of KHOU-TV to televise anti-gambling sermons by Ed Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church; registered opposition to pari-mutuel gambling and pledged support for efforts to defeat the measure on the Nov. 3 ballot; and expressed appreciation to Southern Baptist women for their contributions to Baptist churches and the cause of Christ.

Berg's resolution pointed to the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee's endorsement of Bork and noted, "Although the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies have historically taken positions on legislative issues, they have traditionally refused to endorse political candidates and/or judicial nominees."

The resolution said endorsements may "hamper our gospel witness" and contribute "to the divisiveness within our convention." It also expressed concern that "an individual so endorsed by the Southern Baptist Convention and/or one of its agencies may hold to or shift to positions that Southern Baptists traditionally have opposed."

"Be it resolved," the resolution concluded, "that we encourage the Union Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptist Convention and their agencies to honor and uphold our historic tradition of non-endorsement of individuals for political offices or judicial service."

After the resolution was introduced at the associational meeting, Paul Pressler, a Houston judge, spoke against it. He then moved to table the measure. The motion to table was approved by a simple majority, 82-70.

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However, Moderator Mario Hernandez of Emmanuel Latin American Baptist Church in Houston, in consultation with Parliamentarian D. Tommy Harrison of Richmond Plaza Baptist Church in Bellaire, ruled, based on Pressler's remarks, Pressler's true intent was to limit debate, not table the resolution for future consideration, and thus the measure would require a two-thirds majority.

After further discussion, the resolution was brought to a vote and approved. Pressler called for a point of order, appealing to the section of Robert's Rules of Order concerning "the motion to lay on the table," but he was ruled out of order.

"It was divisive. We did not have the facts before us," Pressler said later, explaining his reasons for seeking to table the resolution. He protested the decision of the chair, saying "there is no way under any circumstances" that the ruling made was in keeping with proper parliamentary procedure.

Quoting pages 177 and 183 of the 1981 Scott, Foresman and Company edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Parliamentarian Harrison defended the ruling. Citing the section on "misuses of the motion," Harrison said a motion to table cannot properly be used "with the intention of either killing an embarrassing question without a direct vote, or of suppressing a question without debate." He went on to note, "Only a two-thirds vote can rightfully suppress a main question without allowing free debate."

"Clearly he wanted to limit debate," Harrison said, noting the remarks Pressler made prior to the motion to table.

Berg was gratified by the association's affirmation of the "non-endorsement" resolution.

"As an individual pastor, I do not publicly endorse individuals for office or appointment because I realize it would hurt my Christian witness with people who oppose the endorsed individual," said Berg. "This was a good example of grassroots, conservative Southern Baptists showing their support for a historic Baptist position."

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Midwestern Trustees Reject
Requiring Faculty Statements

N-10

Baptist Press
10/23/87

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--An effort to require seminary administrators and faculty members to submit written statements of their theological positions regarding the Bible was defeated by trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary during their Oct. 19-20 fall meeting.

The trustees unanimously adopted a recommendation by their executive committee to have the trustee instructional committee "study carefully the recommendations of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, to receive and consider input from the trustees and to work closely with the seminary president and trustee chairman in formulating and recommending appropriate action and/or response for consideration by trustees" at their April 11-12, 1988 meeting.

By a vote of 19-8, trustees tabled the effort by Jack D. Amis, a medical doctor from Hopkinsville, Ky., to require "the president, his administrative staff and members of the faculty each provide in writing a statement of his theological position with regard to the Baptist Faith and Message statement regarding the Bible as being truth without any mixture of error and give his position in regard to the examples of diversity of opinion, 1-4, under Section 1, 'Sources of the Controversy' in the Peace Committee's report."

Those examples state that Adam and Eve were real people, that the miracles of the Bible are historical events, that biblical books were written by the attributed authors and that historical narratives in the Bible are accurate.

Amis' motion also would have required that the written statements "be made available in full to each trustee by Feb. 1, 1988."

Amis made his motion at the beginning of the meeting, as trustees were considering the adoption of the agenda, which included a report from the executive committee on the proposed response to the SBC Peace Committee. His two-part motion also asked that the "main business" of the trustees' spring meeting be the Peace Committee report and the institutions response to it.

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For more than 50 minutes trustees debated Amis' motion. After voting to divide the motion into two parts, the trustees eventually passed an amended motion declaring the board's intent to "allow adequate time" to explore the Peace Committee report and the seminary's response during the April meeting.

The section requesting the written statements was postponed until after the trustee executive committee could bring its report which also included its proposal for dealing with the SBC Peace Committee report.

In proposing the executive committee's recommendation to refer the Peace Committee report to the instructional committee, trustee chairman Truett Gannon, pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., said: "The president and I did not want to be presumptuous and prepare a report for your consideration. We decided it would be more appropriate for us to recommend a process which would allow for input from each trustee before a response is prepared."

After trustees voted to adopt the executive committee recommendation, they returned to the discussion of Amis' request for written statements.

"I'm not out to get anybody or to fire anybody," Amis told the trustees. He said it was not even necessary for faculty and administrators to sign the statements. "I just believe if a man believes something he ought to be able to stand by it."

Amis said there was no way for the trustees to know what actions needed to be taken until they learned where the administrators and faculty members were in their beliefs.

Midwestern President Milton Ferguson reminded the group that every member of the faculty signed the Baptist Faith and Message Statement when each was elected to the faculty. He told the trustees that following the Southern Baptist Convention in June, the faculty voluntarily communicated to the president their willingness to reaffirm their commitment to teach and live by that statement of faith. Ferguson also cautioned the trustees against any action that could communicate suspicion or mistrust of faculty and staff.

James Jones, a trustee from Trenton, Mich., voiced apparent support of Amis' request for determining positions related to examples of beliefs held by the majority of Southern Baptists.

"The Peace Committee report acknowledges there is room for different interpretations under the Baptist Faith and Message," Jones said. "What we as trustees have to find out is where our faculty is within the Baptist Faith and Message."

Trustee Graydon K. Kitchens of Minden, La., described that issue differently. He contended the issue before the trustees was "whether we want to let the Baptist Faith and Message be our statement of faith to which we must adhere in order to teach at our seminary or whether we want to let the Baptist Faith and Message plus a few pet credos and doctrinal statements be the standard by which we operate."

After defeating an attempt to refer the matter to the instructional committee, the trustees voted 19-8 to table Amis' motion.

Instructional committee chairman Doyle Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Great Bend, Kan., invited trustees to share any concerns they might have as well as suggestions about how the instructional committee might go about its work.

"I assure you we want to hear from you as we prepare a report for your consideration next April," he told trustees.

A long-range planning progress report was scheduled to be the major focus of the two-day trustee meeting. Ferguson asked the trustees what kind of school Midwestern Seminary should be when it celebrates its 50th anniversary in the year 2007. "What kind of people will Southern Baptists be?" he asked. "The answer to these questions rests in our hands."

Recalling that he had predicted a time when it would be difficult to get a hearing for the gospel, Ferguson said, "Never in the history of the American republic has there been such deep cynicism and absolute distrust heaped on the church and people who call the name of Jesus Christ."

He said Christians had been guilty of "commercializing the born-again mystery of personal religion and we deserve what we are getting."

"Ministers of the future are going to have to know with their heads, as well as feel with their hearts. They are going to have to be able to do with their hands and land on their feet in a largely antagonistic society," Ferguson declared.

To help develop this type of minister, Ferguson said Midwestern Seminary should be a place where those who come to study are involved in education for a lifetime of excellence in ministry.

During a discussion about recent Missouri legislation concerning not-for-profit organizations and trustee liability, trustee Jerry Davenport, a layman from Sheffield, Texas, raised a question about how board members should respond appropriately to criticism or questions about seminary matters.

Ferguson said questions should be referred to him so they can be handled through proper channels. He assured the trustees that right before every trustee meeting, they will receive complaints.

"I used to think these were coincidental. Now I know better. There are those who deliberately attempt to sow distrust and suspicion between the trustees, the faculty and the administration," he charged.

Trustees also participated in a ground-breaking ceremony for seven new buildings providing 28 apartments for student housing. The project, to be constructed on the seminary campus by the Seminary Housing Corporation, will cost more than \$1 million. The debt on the project will be retired through rental fees.

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(Participating in the preparation of this article were Marty Blankenship and Pam Parry, Midwestern Seminary, and Bob Terry, editor of the Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention.)

N-CO

Southeastern Seminary President,
Dean Set Plans To Terminate Roles

By Larry E. High and R.G. Puckett

Baptist Press
10/23/87

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--In a surprise announcement which stunned the faculty, student body and the community, W. Randall Lolley announced his plans to terminate his presidency at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, a post he has held for 13 years.

The 56-year-old native of Alabama -- who holds two degrees from Southeastern and is the only alumnus to serve as its president -- told a tearful and stunned student body Oct. 22 that action taken by seminary trustees the preceding week left him no alternative. Trustees removed all power for selecting new faculty members from the faculty and gave it completely to Lolley and trustees.

"I cannot fan into flame a vision which I believe to be contradictory to the dream which formed Southeastern in 1951 and has nourished me as a student and alumnus of the school," Lolley said at the conclusion of his chapel sermon. "I have reached some conclusions that make it necessary to begin discussing with the appropriate persons the termination of my presidency."

Lolley gave no date when the resignation would be effective. He tentatively has scheduled a Nov. 3 meeting with four members of the trustee board. They are Robert E. Crowley, chairman; James R. DeLoach, vice chairman; Jesse P. Chapman, immediate past chairman; and W. Lee Beaver Jr., chairman immediately before Chapman.

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Lolley also revealed he had received a letter from Morris Ashcraft requesting that he be relieved of the role of dean but be permitted to continue on the faculty as professor of theology.

Lolley has no faculty status nor tenure, but Ashcraft has both. In his letter to Lolley, Ashcraft wrote: "The recent actions and stated intentions of the majority of our board of trustees indicate to me that I will not be able to implement their guidelines for the instruction unit of the seminary. Therefore, I hereby request that you plan for me to relinquish my position as dean of the faculty."

Lolley prepared a statement but would not make printed copies of it available because he will make it his official resignation which must go to the trustees. He left the campus immediately after the chapel service to go the bedside of his father who is seriously ill.

"In these resignations (Lolley and Ashcraft), we suffer two grievous losses," Professor Richard Hester told a crowd of students and friends at a press conference held on the steps of Broyhill Hall, the building where the trustees met the week before.

"We are deeply saddened but not terribly surprised," Hester read from a prepared statement. "President Lolley and Dean Ashcraft have both made it abundantly clear that they will not implement the policies of political fundamentalism now being enacted by a narrow majority of our board of trustees."

"The president and the dean have told us they will not serve as agents of the persons who want to overturn this school's distinguished 37-year tradition of competent, open, responsible theological education. They have told us they refuse to preside over a fundamentalist school," Hester, president of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, told several hundred students and media representatives.

With the faculty assembled behind him, Hester said, "We respond to their resignations with grief and a profound sense of loss, but we also respond with affirmation of their values, their integrity and their courage."

Robert D. Crowley, a pastor in Rockville, Md. -- who was elected chairman of the board of trustees, unseating Chapman, who could have served another year -- repeatedly has said trustees have no plans to fire any existing faculty members. However, he did indicate all new faculty members will be inerrantists.

Crowley said he was shocked that the president's resignation was "announced so emphatically to the student body."

"The message that sends is that the decision is non-negotiable," Crowley said in a telephone interview with Todd Ackerman of the Raleigh News and Observer. "Our major task now will be to find someone who will be able to assume the leadership Dr. Lolley so effectively provided."

About the search for a new president, Crowley said, "I would be an imbecile if I tried to tell you I didn't have some names going through my mind. I can assure that whoever he is, he will be an inerrantist."

Other trustees also reacted. Chapman, a retired surgeon in Asheville, N.C., said the resignation came as a surprise, but expressed his regrets and called the situation a tragedy.

"I felt it would be very difficult for President Lolley to keep his own sense of what was appropriate and right after the trustees' meeting Oct. 12-14," Chapman said. "Dean Ashcraft is also a man of high principles."

"I am real surprised at this," said William D. Delahoyde, an assistant U.S. attorney from Raleigh, N.C. "This subject did not come up during the board meeting. ... Perhaps this is a function of the thought he had given to his administration between the end of the board meeting and now."

Delahoyde reported Lolley had "said to me in the past that he was willing to work with the board. He realized conservatives need to be included in the board." Delahoyde also said he was surprised Lolley reacted negatively to the recent trustee action concerning faculty selection, because the change "enhanced his authority in that area."

"I was not surprised" at the resignation, said Mark Caldwell, a pastor from Hyattsville, Md. "There is no way Randall Lolley can administer that school under these directives of the present board of trustees. He could not maintain his honor, his integrity -- he just could not do it. His announcement that he plans to resign is an act of integrity and honor."

"I'm just bleeding a little bit. I'm a Southeastern graduate myself," said W. Jerry Holcomb, a pastor from Virginia Beach, Va.

He said he was not shocked by the announcement: "I had suspected it in light of the last board meeting. If the deacons I serve with had shown what the trustees showed ... it would have been fairly obvious that the working conditions would have been very difficult to operate in."

"I was absolutely shocked and flabbergasted," said DeLoach, an associate pastor from Houston. "When we left the campus, there was a spirit of reconciliation and openness I've always found with Randall Lolley."

Reports that Lolley "could not work with fundamentalist trustees" do not sound like the Lolley he has come to know, DeLoach added. "Something must have happened to make him feel this way," he said.

DeLoach said he is sympathetic with the Southeastern community: "Randall Lolley is a very popular president, a very popular colleague. I would be greatly disappointed if the students and faculty were not disappointed. ... My spirit grieves with the students. Right now, all they can see is blood and thunder."

He also reiterated the pledge that faculty will not be fired. "Everytime anything has been said about firing, we have tried to squelch that rumor," he said, noting the issue of professors who are inerrantists is "a hiring matter," not a question of dismissing faculty.

The faculty at Southeastern has no plans to resign en masse, Hester reported: "We do not intend to give up our prophetic voice. We do not intend to give up our academic freedom. We do not intend to abandon this school's 37-year tradition of quality theological education. We intend to continue our classes today, tomorrow and the months ahead, fulfilling our responsibility to our students."

He added only occasionally in history does this kind of "opportunity come to the faculty, the staff and the students of a theological school."

"Only occasionally does an opportunity come to join together in proclaiming the truth in the face of a stifling, oppressive and powerful political movement," he said. "The events of the past 11 days have shaped this campus into the clearest and most determined opposition New Right fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention has ever faced. The loses of a great president and a great dean make us all the more determined to continue this fight."

Following Lolley's announcement, students gathered outside to pray, to share testimonies and feelings, read Scripture and sing.

Student Council President Beverly Hardgrove told her fellow students, "Dr. Lolley wrote me a letter last week of one sentence and it was very special, 'We don't know what the future holds, but we know Who holds our future.'

"I knew last Tuesday (Oct. 13) afternoon in the trustees meeting that something here had died and some idea that we were experincing had been lost. We are called to a new hope and our hope is in God," she said.

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(Also contributing to this story was Marv Knox of the Baptist Press central office.)