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89-30

Southeastern trustees blame
Lolley, faculty for problems

By Marv Knox

N-10

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--A former president's failed leadership and the faculty's "public opinion campaign" precipitated the accreditation crisis at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, a trustee report says.

The 60-page report was drafted by the trustees' instruction committee in response to an investigation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It cites SACS' own study as part of the problem, saying SACS has been unfair to the Wake Forest, N.C., school.

SACS and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada are evaluating Southeastern Seminary following more than 16 months of controversy.

Conservatives gained a majority on the seminary board in 1987, following eight years of theological/political controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention. The new majority changed Southeastern's faculty-selection process in October of that year, vesting more responsibility with the president and trustees.

President W. Randall Lolley and seven other administrators subsequently resigned. Lolley cited the policy change -- which he said ensures that only biblical inerrantists can be added to the faculty and disallows faculty leadership in selecting new teachers -- as the reason.

SACS and ATS then sent investigating teams to the school.

Southeastern is "a very troubled campus and divided institution," the initial ATS report states. "The provisions and principles internal to an academic institution have been severely threatened and in some instances abrogated."

The SACS report says Southeastern does not conform to some accreditation standards in matters of faculty selection, academic freedom, and organization and administration. It also raises "serious questions" about the effectiveness of the school.

In addition to the 60-page response, the Southeastern trustees' report to SACS contains several hundred pages of supporting material, such as official Southeastern Seminary and SBC policies, trustee minutes and newspaper clippings.

The Southeastern report deals with SACS' criticisms, in trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley's words, "point by point, paragraph by paragraph."

Trustees acted in accordance with SBC mandate and Southeastern's own bylaws in October 1987, when they made the changes that precipitated the seminary's turmoil, the report says.

"Southeastern ... had never been representative of the more conservative element within the SBC," it says and notes a 10-year "emphasis on making (SBC) seminaries representative of the constituency they were created to serve."

"The SBC desire for change and Southeastern Seminary's resistance to change collided in the October 1987 trustee board meeting," the report says. Trustee actions represented "an honest attempt to provide a responsive basis on which the conflict (between the SBC at-large and the seminary) can be resolved," it notes.

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Furthermore, the actions were "appropriate to make the administrative manual consistent with the bylaws," it adds.

Turning to Lolley, the report says he previously "occupied the middle ground of the impasse between the SBC and the seminary," and he "attempted to steer a middle way which would bring the parties together" as late as October 1986.

But a year later, he "abandoned the role of conciliator and in his fall convocation address stated he would 'rather see the school die than change its historic emphasis,'" the report says.

It faults him for failing to provide the proper leadership: "At the conclusion of the October (1987) board meeting, the board of trustees expected and hoped that Dr. Lolley would provide the leadership that the seminary needed and guide its way through the impasse that existed between the seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention. ...

"Regretably, rather than assume this responsibility, Dr. Lolley one week later announced his intention to resign. Subsequent to his resignation, he announced a personal campaign to 'deliver the school from its enemies.'"

The report adds: "The board agrees with the SACS committee to the extent that the changes adopted by the board have had an adverse impact upon institutional effectiveness. The board submits that this adverse impact would have been negligible had Dr. Lolley and other previous administrators assumed and provided leadership guiding the institution through this difficult time."

Focusing on faculty, the report says: "The primary reason for the breakdown in collegiality has been the inability of the faculty and other constituencies to adapt to changes allowing for the inclusion of alternative viewpoints at the school.

"The intense emotionalism of the controversy and the political affiliation, by and large, of the faculty within the controversy has injured opportunities for reasoned discussion. ...

"Some faculty actions have not been conceived or conducted in the best interests of the seminary. ... The public opinion campaign initiated by the faculty was an attempt to intimidate the trustees from offering changes at the institution in accordance with the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The report charges SACS has treated the seminary unfairly in at least two areas.

First, it says the SACS study committee was over-broad in its assumption that trustees have made belief in biblical inerrancy "a requirement for faculty eligibility."

The report counters, "The trustees do not believe it is fair for the committee to ascribe to the board a position which has not been endorsed by official action."

Second, the report says: "The trustees note their concern that the SACS report, by and large, seems to review the events at Southeastern 'in a light most favorable' to the faculty, former administrators and certain of the more vocal students and student groups. As a result, we do not believe that the seminary as a whole, or the board of trustees, or the Southern Baptist Convention has been treated fairly in the association's review of circumstances existing at Southeastern as relating to accreditation."

The report says the trustees' change in the faculty-selection process was both legal and legitimate. And although the faculty "is no longer singularly responsible for the determination of the candidate pool from which nominees for faculty positions are designated, the trustees fail to recognize how removal of the power to determine the candidate pool of faculty appointments infringes upon the freedom and integrity of the faculty," it says.

"The trustees submit that a fair evaluation reveals that no reasonable threat to academic freedom exists at the school. The seminary's physical and financial condition (is) strong. The same faculty teach the same classes in the same classrooms. The board of trustees remains committed to academic due process, including the legitimate exercise of academic freedom, while at the same time making the seminary responsive to its Southern Baptist constituency."

The report apparently was leaked to individuals outside the trustees, faculty and administration in early February. News accounts of the document appeared in North Carolina newspapers a few days later.

Baptist Press received a copy of the report, without the supporting documents, Feb. 15.

The draft of the report has been given to SACS. It will be presented to the full board at its March 13-15 meeting. "Until such time as it is approved, it presumes no official standing to speak for the board of trustees," it says.

SACS has told the seminary it will delay its decision on accreditation until next December. It has asked the seminary to present a progress report July 1.

Leaders remain mum
about SEBTS report

By Marv Knox

N-CD

Baptist Press
2/23/89

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Leaders involved with a Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee report to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have declined to comment on its contents.

The report was drafted by the Southeastern Seminary trustees' instruction committee in response to a SACS investigation of the Wake Forest, N.C., school's academic accreditation.

SACS and the Southern Association of Theological Schools are examining Southeastern Seminary following 16 months of controversy.

During that time, a new conservative majority of trustees modified the school's faculty-selection process; former President W. Randall Lolley and seven other administrators subsequently resigned; and trustees elected Lewis A. Drummond to succeed Lolley.

Trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Md., told Baptist Press he preferred not to comment on the contents of the report to SACS.

He cited his pledge to maintain the confidential nature of its release to trustees, faculty, administrators and the accrediting agency as his reason.

However, the report is to be discussed by trustees at their March 13-15 meeting, Crowley said. After that meeting, a final draft of the report will be forward to SACS, he added.

Drummond likewise declined to comment on the contents of the report and cited the current confidential nature of its status.

C. Michael Hawn, professor of church music and president of the Southeastern Seminary chapter of the American Association of University Professors, also declined to comment on the contents of the report. "I am bound by the reason of my acceptance (of the report) not to comment on its substance," he said.

Hawn told Baptist Press the faculty voted Feb. 8 to recommend to the trustees, through Drummond, "a process of negotiation to make an institutional report."

The process would involve a protracted meeting involving representatives from the faculty, administration, trustees, student body, alumni and the American Association of University Professors, along with a negotiator from the Association of Theological Schools.

That group then would draft an "institutional response" to SACS, designed to resolve conflicts and maintain accreditation, he said.

Lolley could not be reached for comment.

Centrist leaders oppose
proposed new SBC agency

By Jim Newton & Bob Stanley

N-70

NASHVILLE (BP)--Leaders of a "centrist coalition" in the Southern Baptist Convention have announced they oppose the creation of a proposed new Religious Liberty Commission and instead urge support of the existing Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Seven spokesmen for the coalition called "Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention" voiced wide-ranging opinions during a Feb. 20 news conference at the Stouffer Nashville Hotel two hours before the SBC Executive Committee was scheduled to convene at the SBC Building two blocks away.

Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, presided at the news conference for three other pastors and three laymen involved in the organization created last December "to preserve historic principles" in the 14.8-million-member denomination.

In his opening statement, Moore said the group came "to urge the SBC Executive Committee to take specific action to reject creation of a separate Religious Liberty Commission" as a new SBC agency.

The group also requested the SBC Pastors' Conference and SBC Forum to schedule their meetings after the Southern Baptist Convention rather than before the denomination's annual meeting "in order to depoliticize both meetings," voiced support of the faculties of SBC seminaries and urged support of freedom of the press.

In addition to Moore, participants in the press conference were Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz.; Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta; James Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.; and laymen John F. Baugh of Houston, George McCotter of Lillington, N.C.; and Steve Tondera of Huntsville, Ala.

Moore, Jackson and Vestal opposed the creation of the proposed commission and voiced support of the existing Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington.

(The next day, the 76-member Executive Committee voted 42-27 to recommend that the commission be created. The proposal must be approved by messengers to two SBC annual meetings, which convene each June. The Executive Committee turned back two proposals that would have taken funds from the Baptist Joint Committee and given them to the SBC Christian Life Commission and SBC Public Affairs Committee.)

Jackson argued that the Southern Baptist Convention has upheld the Baptist Joint Committee three times since 1984, and that the subcommittee proposal to create a new agency was in direct contradiction to votes of three conventions.

"There is more at stake here than power in the Southern Baptist Convention," said Jackson. "If you are power drunk, you want to be where the power is" in Washington.

Vestal, who recently moved to Atlanta from the pastorate of First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, said he felt Southern Baptists have a much stronger voice in the nation's capital when they cooperate with the eight other Baptist conventions that support the Baptist Joint Committee.

Participants in the news conference declined to endorse any candidate for president of the SBC at the annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15, but left the impression the group would field a candidate.

Jackson, who was defeated by Jerry Vines last year for the SBC presidency, said he had joined the new centrist organization because he had "longed for" a place where he could be involved in Southern Baptist life without having to be endorsed by or recognized as part of any particular political group in the convention. He said he did not want to be accused of being "a moderate, a liberal or a skunk."

He urged other Southern Baptists to join him in standing for the Bible, for missions and evangelism "while maintaining our traditional Baptist heritage and principles."

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Asked if he would allow his name to be presented at the 1989 annual meeting, Jackson said he had not been contacted by any individual and had no plans to seek the presidency. He declined to say he would not again be a candidate at some future time, but told reporters afterwards this year was not the time to do so.

Jackson emphasized he has never "run against" anyone for the SBC presidency. When he announced his candidacy early last year, he said, no other candidate had announced. Later Vines decided to run, he said. "I'm a little bit weary of being called a candidate 'against' somebody else's candidate," he explained.

At one point in the news conference, Jackson was asked if he ever had been offered any "political deal" in the past. Jackson said that leaders of the SBC currently in power had "strongly implied that if I'd just come home and play ball, I could be a part of the leadership."

Jackson said he never could sacrifice his integrity for any position.

In response to an earlier question about how nominees for committee or trustee assignments have been made, Jackson said he could verify, in a court of law if necessary, one instance in which a possible SBC Executive Committee nominee from Arizona was called. The nominee first was asked if he were a biblical inerrantist, and he answered, "Yes." But when he was asked who he voted for in St. Louis, site of the 1987 annual meeting, he responded, "Richard Jackson" and then was told, "We can't use you." Jackson did not identify names of individuals involved in the event.

Participants in the news conference said they were committed to working within the SBC to try to bring the denomination back to its historic principles, such as the priesthood of all believers, the autonomy of the local church, separation of church and state, and cooperation in missions.

Vestal identified himself as a "biblical inerrantist" who is willing to cooperate with others who may not believe the same way he does but are committed to cooperation for missions and evangelism.

Control of the denomination has been taken over by a group who say "that if you don't confess faith in the Scripture a certain way, you are not qualified to participate in leadership in the SBC," Vestal said, and added the group has now gone beyond that point, saying "if you are not involved in our movement, you can't participate in leadership."

"That destroys trust," Vestal said. "And it is time to stop. Enough is enough."

Vestal observed that while theological problems have existed in the SBC in the past, those pale in comparison to the current situation.

While Vestal was speaking, a fire alarm at the hotel went off, interrupting proceedings. It later was identified by hotel officials as a false alarm. Slatton, the next speaker, said the alarm the "centrist group" was sounding "is not false."

Conservatives who now control the SBC had created a creedal test for leadership and rejected the concept of cooperation on which the denomination was founded in 1845, Slatton said.

Baugh, a food service executive from Houston who founded an organization called Baptist Laity for the Baptist Faith and Message, called for a return of integrity, moral conduct and the cooperative spirit among Southern Baptists.

Baugh also decried journalism that is biased and that engages in character assassination. Pointing out that his organization had discontinued publication of an independent publication, Baptist Laity Journal, Baugh expressed hope that another independent journal, the Southern Baptist Advocate, published by conservatives would be discontinued.

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McCotter, who owns a moving and storage company in Lillington, N.C., said laypeople in North Carolina are tired of giving money to the denomination with few results. The controversy in the denomination had caused leaders to focus on the wrong things, instead of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust emphasis on missions and evangelism, he said, noting, "We are putting power, and even putting the Bible, first when we ought to put God first."

Tondera, a mathematician at the space center in Huntsville, said now is the time for laypeople and pastors who have been silent to provide leadership in dealing with disharmony in the denomination.

Vestal, Jackson and Moore pointed out the churches they have led in Midland, Phoenix and Amarillo each give almost \$1 million per year to support the denomination's joint efforts through the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget. Jackson said, however, that they were not going to cut financial support of the Cooperative Program because they did not get their way.

Their emphasis would be on the issues, not on political organization or endorsing candidates, he said, adding, "What needs to be done is to help Southern Baptists better understand who we are."

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N-CO

News conference remarks
called insult, untruth

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
2/23/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Remarks made during a news conference of a "centrist coalition" have been called insulting, untrue and unfounded by members of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Seven spokesmen from a coalition calling itself "Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention" held a news conference on the eve of the February meeting of the Executive Committee in Nashville. During the hour-long session, several speakers claimed that to be involved in convention leadership people have to pledge allegiance to the "conservative political movement."

The day after the news conference, one Executive Committee member, Fred Wolfe, asked for a "point of personal privilege" at the conclusion of the committee's evening plenary session. Wolfe asked for a "public apology from this centrist group for sowing seeds of discord and mistrust of our present leadership."

"I attended that meeting in its entirety, except for the first two or three minutes, and was there an hour," said Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala. "In this press conference ... this group emphatically stated that the present crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention is an integrity crisis.

"The point was that there is a lack of integrity in the present leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention, including members of this committee elected in recent years. Our present president, Jerry Vines, and other recent presidents had their integrity called into question."

"Their (participants at the news conference) clear statement was that recently-elected members of this committee -- and I heard it with my own ears -- were selected because they agreed in advance to support the agenda of a group of people.

"We were implied to be puppets, who must vote as directed to vote. These statements made by the so-called centrist group are unfounded and untrue."

Wolfe, who was elected to the Executive Committee in 1987 and serves as chairman of the public relations workgroup that oversees the work of the denomination's news service, Baptist Press, pointed to three divided votes in the just-completed plenary session, and said: "It is obvious in our votes that (being puppets) is not true."

The "so-called" centrist group "once again ... (has) resorted to innuendo and fear to try to cause distrust of the present duly-elected leadership, including members of this committee," he said. "(They) spoke of restoring trust, while in that press conference they were causing distrust of present leaders."

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In addition to asking for a public apology, and deploring that the centrists "chose the Executive Committee setting to call this press conference to furthur divide us," Wolfe also asked committee members to "join me in prayer that the so-called centirst group will stop sowing seeds of discord and distrust in this convention."

Another committee member, Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., also asked to speak, and said: "I want to say that as a newly elected member (who was elected to the Executive Committee in 1988) that I never agreed to anyone's agenda. I was never recruited by anyone."

"I hope I am where I am (on the committee) because of the church that I pastor and because of my record as a pastor of being a man who loves the Southern Baptist Convention and loves winning people to Jesus Christ."

Floyd later told Baptist Press: "I am pastor of the largest church in Arkansas. I find it insulting that some one thinks I am a puppet."

The Arkansas pastor called for passage or a resolution or a motion -- "whatever needs to be done" to go on record against the news conference.

However, Chairman Charles Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., said the remarks would be included in the minutes, but declined to take a vote.

Later, he told Baptist Press he agreed with the remarks of Wolfe and Floyd but did not want to allow the centrist group "an additional platform."

Baptist Press contacted five other Executive Committee members who attended the news conference for their reactions.

Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, declined to comment on charges a political group had taken over, but said: "I had hoped we would be going to Las Vegas (site of the 1989 annual meeting) for a soul-winning, evangelistic event. I deeply regret the spirit of the press conference of those who support liberalism in our schools and that they said they would be opposing our incumbent president in Las Vegas."

Eldridge Miller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Sallisaw, Okla., said he had prepared and distributed copies of the press packet handed out at the news conference to members of the Executive Committee, for their information.

"I believe they had a right to hold a press conference ... no one wants to muzzle them," he said. "Fred Wolfe's reaction to the press conference also was appropriate, especially regarding the inference that present SBC leadership was chosen because they belong to a group with a political agenda."

William F. Harrell, chairman of the committee's program and budget subcommittee, expressed disappointment with the news conference.

"I was disappointed that they chose to come here from all over the country ... to attract attention and create issues to rally people to go to Las Vegas," said Harrell, pastor of Abilene Baptist Church in Martinez, Ga.

"I was extremely disappointed in the flavor and atmosphere of the news conference. It was just another forum for the same people to say the same thing they have said before, except each time it gets more vitriolic."

"The good of the Southern Baptist Convention is not served by people coming here to grandstand at this convention meeting."

Baptist Press also contacted two new members -- both elected in 1988 -- who attended the news conference.

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Jerry Brown, a truckstop operator in Edmond, Okla., commented he has known "Brother Richard" Jackson, one of the participants in the news conference, "for years." He added: "I love him. But I believe what he is doing is causing more division in the convention."

Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church of Phoenix, Ariz., narrowly lost the SBC presidency to Vines in 1988. Since, he has spoken out on a number of issues and spoke frequently during the news conference.

Brown recounted that in San Antonio, Texas, last June, Jackson "came up to me and said, 'I know you and that you are your own man and that you will vote your own heart.'"

"Now," Brown continued, "less than a year later, the accusation has come that the new members of the Executive Committee vote exactly like Judge Pressler tells us."

"I want to make it plain that my commitment is to vote my heart, I pray with wisdom from above and under direction of the (Holy) Spirit."

Gayden Jones, a homemaker from Baton Rouge, La., said she was "personally offended as a new member to be called a person who is a puppet. ... I am not a puppet to anyone. I am a bond servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will vote as I think it best serves him and the convention."

She added that when she was contacted about serving on the Executive Committee, she was "asked a question. That was if I had accepted Jesus Christ as my lord and savior. I said, 'Yes.'"

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Evangelize, disciple,
Smith tells seminarians

By Breena Kent Paine

N-CO
(NOBTS)
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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"The business of the church is winning people to Christ and discipling them," Ralph Smith told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during campus revival.

Christians should share Christ with others "as you are going," said Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

"As you are going to the grocery store tonight, ... as you're going to play golf on Saturday, ... as you're going to get your car filled with gas, talk to somebody about Jesus," said Smith, who has been president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and chairman of the Southern Baptist Committee on Committees.

"You and I are to share the whole gospel with the whole world in the age in which we're living. Sometimes I feel we're not doing very much with this opportunity and this challenge.

"According to the 1987 world population sheet, ... there were 139,101,802 new babies born in our world in 1986. In 1986, all of the churches that are under the Christian umbrella ... baptized less than 9 million people."

If population in the United States alone were stagnated, "at the rate Southern Baptists are witnessing to America, it would take us 300 years to win America to Jesus Christ," he said.

"And if you were to apply that ratio to the rest of the world, it would take 4,000 years to win the rest of the world to Jesus Christ. It's very obvious that you and I need to do a better job as we are going to share the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Christians also should disciple people who have made the decision to follow Christ: "We have a way sometimes of winning them to Jesus, and then forgetting them. People need a doctrinal mindset that is rooted and grounded in their faith and in the word of Almighty God.

"It's not that we get the word of God in our heads. It is that we live the word of God with our lives. A lot of people today are talking about taking the Bible literally. I want to ask you, 'Do you take the Bible seriously? Are you living those parts of the Bible that you know?'

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"You can have all the book learning in the world, but if you do not live the word of God, it amounts to very little in your life. Jesus said we are to disciple (other Christians) so that they live out what they've been taught.

"God ... is missing from a lot of people's lives, and the truth is, probably you and I are to blame."

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Special committee approved
to hear concerns about SBC

By Linda Lawson & Dan Martin

N-10
Baptist Press
2/23/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--A special committee of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee will be appointed to receive Southern Baptists' communications of concern about developments in the denomination.

Action to create the special committee came during the Feb. 20-22 meeting of the Executive Committee in Nashville. Any recommendations of the special committee would be reported for consideration to the Executive Committee through its administration and convention arrangements subcommittee.

Creation of the new body was recommended as a process for responding to a "memorial" from messengers to the 1988 Baptist General Association of Virginia meeting, Nov. 15-16, in Virginia Beach to messengers to the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention meeting, June 13-15, in Las Vegas, Nev.

The memorial -- a formal statement whereby one body expresses concerns to another body -- was part of a report of the President's Task Force on the Denominational Crisis adopted by Virginia messengers.

The memorial will be printed in the 1989 SBC Book of Reports as part of the Executive Committee report.

The memorial states: "The present crisis in Southern Baptist life calls for a re-examination of the partnership (between the SBC and state conventions). ... We earnestly desire a relationship in which no faction -- right or left -- can be arbitrary and exclusionary."

It lists four questions for discussion:

- "How can we best communicate with one another?"
- "How can partnership on representation (on SBC boards of trustees and committees) be assured?"
- "How can resolutions and public pronouncements be safeguarded so that misuse by those inside and outside the fellowship is diminished?"
- "How can we work together to develop a distribution of (SBC) Cooperative Program (unified budget) gifts that reflects grassroots priorities in mission support funding?"

Also to be printed in the SBC Book of Reports will be a "Conservative Response" to the memorial. The response has been signed by more than 800 Virginia pastors, staff members and laypeople, said Executive Committee member T.C. Pinckney, a retired Air Force officer from Alexandria, Va. Pinckney had mailed the response to Executive Committee members prior to the February meeting.

The conservative response states the "hope that the substance of this response will stimulate deeper and more broadly representative dialogue among Baptists of differing perspectives and, at the same time, advise the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention that the 'Report' (of the President's Task Force) does not reflect the thinking of many Virginia Baptists."

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A concluding paragraph states, "Conservatives in Virginia want the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention to know that although we pray for an end to the conflict which our convention has experienced for the last 10 years, we do not wish to purchase peace at the price of capitulation to the forces of liberalism."

BGCV Executive Director Reginald McDonough told Baptist Press he was satisfied with the process established by the Executive Committee. Since the memorial is addressed to messengers to the 1989 SBC, McDonough said, a member of the President's Task Force will introduce it as a motion for consideration in Las Vegas. He said BGAV representatives likely will not meet with the special committee until the matter is brought to the attention of SBC messengers.

Charles Sullivan, chairman of the Executive Committee, said he will appoint the committee and present it to the Executive Committee for approval at its meeting in Las Vegas June 12.

"I will probably appoint a seven-member committee," said Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn. "But there is a legality involved. I cannot appoint them without bringing it to the Executive Committee for them to approve."

Sullivan said he was not aware of the legality, which involves Tennessee law regulating non-profit corporations, until after the meeting when the convention attorney, James P. Guenther of Nashville, told him about the legal requirement.

"I will work on naming the committee in the next few weeks but it will not be official until I present it to the Executive Committee," he said.

McDonough explained that Virginia Baptists "are not trying to tear down the Cooperative Program. We want to strengthen the cooperative process of giving through dialogue."

Pinckney, who introduced an amendment to include the conservative response in the SBC Book of Reports, said he supported the recommendation to create the special committee and to print the BGAV memorial.

"We all recognize the matters addressed in the memorial are very deeply and sincerely felt. There are also deep and sincere differences in points of view among Virginia Baptists," he said.

Executive Committee member James Wideman, pastor of Screven Memorial Baptist Church in Portsmouth, N.H., said he favored formation of the committee to "accept all responses" of Southern Baptists.

"Wild accusations" have been made by both sides in the 10-year-old denominational controversy, he said. "I think the moderates made a mistake by not responding to the conservatives at that time (in 1979 as the controversy was beginning and moderates controlled denominational structures). I don't want the conservatives to make the mistake of not listening to the moderates now."

"I think by forming this committee we'll be able to show the full extent of our love to this convention."