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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
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Conservatives discuss
evangelism, politics

By Dan Martin & Greg Warner

ATLANTA (BP)--About 100 Southern Baptist conservatives discussed evangelism and politics during a five-hour invitation-only gathering in Atlanta March 3.

The meeting, called by four former presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention and held in First Baptist Church of Atlanta, also dealt with revival, missions giving and featured an hour-long prayer meeting.

According to a news release issued following the meeting, "Prayer, fellowship and reflection regarding the state of our churches and denomination have motivated this assembly of pastors and laymen from across the nation."

One of the participants, James C. Hefley of Hannibal, Mo., said that while "there was a lot of talk about evangelism in Las Vegas," Nev., site of the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC, the meeting was "more like a rally ... to get people hepped up to go to Las Vegas."

Although organizers said the meeting had been planned for some time, participants discussed a recent news conference by Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention in which the group announced it likely will organize for Las Vegas and support a presidential candidate to oppose incumbent Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla.

Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., and SBC president 1979-80, and 1986-88, when asked why 100 men from 20 state conventions would pay their own way to attend the one-day meeting, said, "I think it was because of the shenanigans of the (Southern Baptist) Alliance compounded by the intentions of the erstwhile group now calling themselves 'centrists,' and seeing they might be trying to unseat Jerry Vines."

Rogers added: "The meeting was not primarily a political meeting. It was an exhortative meeting, a revival meeting, a soul-winning meeting, a meeting to discuss the state of the convention. It served to show us we have to keep our lives keen and our hearts warm."

James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and SBC president 1982-84, told Baptist Press: "This is the first meeting we have had since the last convention. We wanted to assess where we felt we were and to encourage our people to participate in the convention in Las Vegas ... to encourage them to come ahead of time and be involved in the witnessing" project planned by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Fred Powell, senior associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and one of the meeting's organizers, said there "was a lot of discussion about various aspects of how important it is to go to Las Vegas, for them to pick their 10 messengers right now and get a commitment from them to go. And to train them in soul winning, right now."

Powell said participants heard messages from three presidents, as well as "brief remarks" from host pastor Charles Stanley, SBC president 1984-86. They also participated in an hour-long prayer meeting, listened to a panel of Stanley, Draper and Rogers and heard a tape recording of a confrontation between Richard Jackson of Phoenix and Houston Judge Paul Pressler.

"Jimmy (Draper) affirmed missions giving through the Cooperative Program; Adrian (Rogers) talked about recommitting ourselves before God; Jerry (Vines) powerfully admonished us that soul-winning must be what we are about," Powell said.

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The meeting was called by Stanley, Rogers, Draper and Bailey Smith, an Atlanta evangelist and president 1980-82, who was unable to attend, reportedly because of a previous engagement at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Vines said he was invited by the four past presidents and stopped over in Atlanta enroute to a Bible conference in Alabama.

Hefley said conservatives are concerned Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention "will come up with some (presidential) candidate" who could defeat Vines, who announced in late February he is willing to be nominated for a second one-year term as president.

"Those fellows (Baptists Committed) sort of laid down the gauntlet and said they were going to make a battle in Las Vegas," Hefley said.

"In Atlanta, the people were concerned that the conservative resurgence could be reversed and it could start in Las Vegas. Many people thought Las Vegas was going to be a routine convention, but it is going to boil down to who can get out the votes."

Draper said: "Our desire is to see Jerry (Vines) re-elected. At this point, there is no announced candidate (to oppose him) and our hope is that there won't be one. We recognize that may be wishful thinking, but we are still hoping."

Hefley was one of two reporters allowed at the meeting. The other was Robert M. Tenery, pastor of Burkemont Baptist Church in Morganton, N.C., and editor of the Southern Baptist Advocate. Both men are closely identified with the conservative movement in the SBC.

The meeting was not off the record, Hefley said, and added he will include an account in volume four of his "Truth in Crisis" series, which concerns the conservative resurgence in the SBC. The volume is expected out in advance of the 1989 annual meeting.

Powell said neither Tenery nor Hefley was invited as "a reporter, but because of their commitment to the (conservative) movement."

Baptist Press asked to be allowed to attend the meeting, but was refused permission. Another reporter, Everett Hullum of Atlanta, representing the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention, was turned away at the door because his name was not on the invitation list.

Powell said organizers sent out 120 invitations. "We asked friends in every state to send names," he said. Hullum, however, said he was told at the door the participation list was drawn up by Powell, Rogers and Pressler, one of the architects of the conservative movement.

Rogers said he "did not know how the (invitation) list was drawn up. It probably was just pieced together." Pressler declined to comment on the meeting.

The panel discussion by Rogers, Stanley and Draper was moderated by Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas and another of the leaders of the conservatives.

"We offered to field any questions," Draper said, "but there really weren't any questions they wanted to ask. They did ask to be updated on some of the matters in the convention."

Robert Crowley, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Md., and chairman of trustees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., briefed participants on events at the seminary, which has been involved in controversy regarding accreditation.

Participants also listened to a 20-minute tape recording of a confrontation between Pressler and Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church Feb. 21.

Jackson lost presidential elections to Rogers in 1987 and was defeated by 340 votes by Vines in 1988.

Hefley, who made the recording and provided copies to Pressler, Jackson and Powell, said it was played "as an awareness thing to let them know what is going on." He said he did not ask that it be played at the Atlanta gathering.

Rogers said there was "not much comment" after the recording was played, "just a sense of shock. They (participants) just listened and shook their heads. It was very sad."

Hefley said "quite a few people prayed" for Jackson "that a spirit of understanding and love would prevail. There was no animosity toward Richard Jackson. Animosity, no; sadness, yes.

"There was no spirit of anger. I think the spirit was one of sadness and tiredness that it was all going to crank up again in Las Vegas. No one is looking forward to it or is going forth eagerly to battle.

"The big emphasis was that we have got to go back and get our people to Las Vegas to do two things: support Jerry Vines and have an evangelistic emphasis."

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Alliance OK's
new seminary

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/7/89

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Alliance has voted to start its own seminary.

Alliance members ratified the proposal 462-42 during their annual convocation March 1-3 in Greenville, S.C.

The Alliance is an organization of Southern Baptist moderates, claiming almost 44,000 members from 40 states. They have vowed to remain in the Southern Baptist Convention but have charged current SBC leaders with rejecting principles and causes they hold dear.

Most notably, they have cited "loss of academic freedom" at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., as a cause for concern.

In October 1987, Southeastern trustees' new conservative majority altered the way the school chooses teachers. President W. Randall Lolley, Dean Morris Ashcraft and other faculty and administrators subsequently resigned, citing the policy changes -- which they interpreted as ensuring that only biblical inerrantists can be added to the faculty -- as their reason.

Since that time, SBC moderates on the Eastern Seaboard have spoken of a need for new ways to educate their ministers.

Last September, the Alliance board of directors created a theological education fund to support "alternative ministerial training." In November, it voted to raise \$250,000 in 1989 for theological education and determined 5 percent of undesignated gifts will support the cause.

Since November, a seminary task force has worked on giving shape to the Alliance's desire for "alternative" ministerial training. Participants in the Greenville convocation ratified the task force's four-part recommendation:

-- "That the Southern Baptist Alliance move toward establishment of a school in Richmond (Va.) for the preparation of ministers, in the hope that it will be a cooperative venture between the SBA and theological institutions in Richmond and elsewhere.

-- "That the proposed seminary be opened as soon as all necessary plans can be implemented and all necessary funds provided.

-- "That the new seminary seek accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada at the earliest possible date.

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-- "That the (SBA) theological education committee be authorized to name seven SBA members to serve on a provisional board of directors, along with six others consisting of the chief executive officers, or their designees, from, the School of Theology of Virginia Union University, the Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Colgate Rochester Divinity School/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Andover-Newton Theological Seminary."

Theological education committee Chairman Tom Graves presented the proposal. He defined three purposes of the new school: "The seminary would be distinctively Baptist in terms of the Baptist heritage, but it would be racially and gender inclusive, with an ecumenical commitment and global perspective. The seminary, while stressing classical theological disciplines, would include in its curriculum opportunities for hands-on practice in ministry. And the seminary, while seeking excellence in scholarship, would provide for and encourage the spiritual growth of its faculty, staff and students."

The proposed seminary would be "no larger than 150 students," said Graves, pastor of St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C. Planners have in mind "a free-standing school, with its own students, its own board, offering its own degrees in its own identifiable building," he added.

The Alliance did not set a date for the start of the new school. Before the convocation, task force members talked of opening this fall, but their recommendation left the opening contingent on receipt of "necessary funds."

Ashcraft, a task force member who has been a primary researcher and planner in the project, said trustees would be responsible for setting a specific budget.

The school probably would need between \$400,000 and \$500,000 during its first year, with perhaps \$100,000 recovered in tuition, he predicted. Tuition could range from \$2,400 to \$5,000 annually, according to a report released by the task force.

Costs can be contained because of the new seminary's relationship with other schools, planners said.

The seminary "would be a cooperative venture" with the three schools that comprise the Richmond Theological Center consortium -- the School of Theology of Virginia Union University, a predominantly black American Baptist school; the Presbyterian School of Christian Education; and Union Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian school -- and the three American Baptist seminaries, "if they are so disposed," the task force report said.

The report noted plans for the seminary's location and facilities "are tentative, since the Richmond institutions would await a decision by the SBA before seeking approval of the plan from their governing boards." However, plans call for the seminary to share facilities of the other schools, at least until it can construct its own.

The new seminary has been assured of classroom space at Northminster Baptist Church in Richmond and access to Union Theological Seminary's library, Graves said.

The seminary initially will offer a master of divinity degree, the task force report said. However, the proposed consortium arrangement with other schools will afford "numerous possibilities for students to achieve their specialties in other institutions," it noted, citing five other degrees available through the Richmond schools.

The Alliance's vote to "move toward establishment" of the seminary means the organization can take three steps, Graves said: "We will make official contacts with the other institutions, to set up necessary structures. We can begin to collect funding necessary to support the school. And we can name a provisional board of directors."

The theological education committee later met to name the Alliance's seven provisional directors. The committee is waiting to announce those directors, pending their acceptance, Graves said.

The provisional board will face such tasks as naming or nominating a permanent board, hiring a fund-raiser and hiring a provisional academic officer, the Alliance board was told.

Seminary debate reveals
Alliance's hopes, fears

By Marv Knox

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Southern Baptist Alliance members voiced their hopes, dreams and fears as they debated whether to start a new seminary.

The Alliance, an organization of Southern Baptist Convention moderates, approved the new seminary during its annual convocation March 1-3 in Greenville, S.C.

Alliance members have talked of starting a new seminary for more than a year.

In October 1987, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees' new conservative majority changed the school's policy for hiring faculty. Moderates claimed the policy ensured that only biblical inerrantists could be hired to teach at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary.

President W. Randall Lolley, six top administrators and several faculty have since resigned.

Meanwhile, the Alliance has voted to start its new seminary in Richmond, Va. It will grant its own degrees but will have relationships with two Presbyterian schools and a predominantly black American Baptist school in Richmond, as well as three American Baptist seminaries in the East.

During the Alliance's debate on the new seminary, Baptist historian Walter Shurden of Mercer University in Macon, Ga., told participants, "This is the most significant decision this body has made since it has been in existence."

That decision should not sacrifice harmony, added Alan Neely, former foreign missionary, Alliance interim executive director and Southeastern Seminary professor, now with Princeton Theological Seminary: "There is no person who has worked on this recommendation who would want to see this body split to start a seminary. We want unity in this body, if not in the SBC."

But advocates of the new seminary stressed the need for such a school.

"The call to ministry first of all is a call to prepare new ministers," said Lolley, now pastor in Raleigh, N.C. "For as the ministers go, so go the churches."

Neely said 800 of 1,400 Virginia Baptist pastors and 1,200 of 3,000 North Carolina Baptist pastors are Southeastern graduates. "The vacuum is going to exist so rapidly as Southeastern shifts from what it was to what it will become," he said. "You are going to establish the future of Southern Baptists on the Eastern Seaboard."

Participants in the debate surfaced a range of concerns about the seminary and the fate of the Alliance:

-- Timing. "We have in place the structure with an executive secretary, a newspaper and now an institution for theological education," said John Dunaway, pastor from Corbin, Ky., and former chairman of the SBC Executive Committee. "I seriously question whether the time has come for this. Let's see if there is a chance of salvaging this ship (the SBC) we have been a part of since 1845."

Prefacing his remarks by talking about times when Southern Baptists "talked about getting on the cutting edge of ethics and social concern," Elmer West, a Richmond pastor and former SBC denominational worker, said: "I agree we run a risk. But I fear we run a greater risk if we do not act, if we wait."

-- SBC split. "If we do establish this kind of school, does this mean we are headed toward another denominational identity?" asked Luther Copeland of Raleigh, a former foreign missionary and Southeastern professor. "If we are headed toward a separate denominational identity other than the SBC, I have serious misgivings. I have serious concerns about sanctioning one more fissure in the body of Christ."

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"There has been concern expressed over schism -- that the SBC might split if we start a seminary in Richmond. That is not the case," said Elizabeth Barnes, a professor at Southeastern. "If schism occurs, there will be other factors. I do not believe this will be a factor."

Added Neely: "Since 1820, Baptists in the South started 240 schools. This did not split Baptists. In the last 16 to 17 years, (conservative) schools were started in Dallas, Memphis and Jacksonville. If the convention divides, it will not be because of starting one school."

-- Identity/support. In establishing the seminary, the Alliance can create "a place for people who see things the way we see things," said Jim Strickland, pastor from Cartersville, Ga. Added another debater: "We cannot capture our identity at one point in time. But we have an opportunity to begin making our identity."

"I wonder if we do not need to have a finer grasp of where we are going before we embrace such a large commitment," Copeland said.

"I do not think the SBA yet has an identity with a great many Southern Baptists who would be in sympathy with us, outside North Carolina and Virginia," said Darrell Adams, Christian singer/songwriter from Louisville, Ky. He expressed concern that formation of a seminary would create the perception the Alliance is "drawing away" from the SBC.

Noted Strickland, "I don't want us to make another important decision based on what we might lose."

-- Role of Southern Seminary. Supporters of the new seminary made several statements that some participants felt were derogatory of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. One was Strickland's remark about the need for "a place for people who see things the way we see things."

Another was Barnes' speech. She told about female Southeastern Seminary students who are concerned about the future of theological education for women. "There is no seminary -- no Southern Baptist seminary -- in existence that has the vision of the Southern Baptist Alliance," she said.

A debater who identified himself as a Southern Seminary graduate noted the possibility that "the tragedy of Southeastern is skewing the vision" of the Alliance. "Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is not lost," he said.

And in an apparent reference to Southern, Dunaway said, "There is at least one institution that has not been taken over."

-- Reconciliation. Seminary advocates emphasized the possibilities for reconciliation with blacks and American Baptists inherent in the school's proposed structure. The SBC split with American Baptists in 1845, primarily over the issue of slavery.

Tom Graves, a pastor in Charlotte, N.C., chair of the Alliance's theological education committee and former professor at Southeastern, urged participants to see the vision of a seminary able to "break down barriers almost 150 years old. ... This proposal of working with blacks and American Baptists is right, whatever is going on in the SBC."

"It is time to bury the Civil War, put that behind us and move in an affirming direction," added Henry Green, pastor from Cocoa, Fla.

"We can build bridges to blacks and American Baptists without a seminary," countered Adams. "We need to be about reconciliation."

-- Cost. "Can we afford it?" Copeland asked. "It would be far better not to start something than to start it and abandon it in two or three years."

Graves noted the Alliance is budgeting only 10 percent of its Global Ministries Fund, or 5 percent of undesignated gifts, for the seminary.

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-- Other schools. Participants discussed the effect of divinity schools at Baptist universities -- such as Wake Forest in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Samford in Birmingham, Ala. -- and Baptist "houses" and other schools.

"Give a little more time," Dunaway urged.

"What is being proposed here is not exclusive," Graves said. Neely added that many such schools will be needed to fill the void left by the change at Southeastern. "We are not going to come close to filling the need of churches in North Carolina and Virginia, not to mention other areas of the country," he said.

The seminary discussion, which filled two segments of an afternoon session, also drew related remarks from an outside observer.

Catherine Allen, associate executive director of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, delivered a previously scheduled address in between the two debate periods.

Allen challenged the Alliance "to move to the middle of the (SBC) stream, even at risk of losing public identity, in order to gain power to support the denomination."

The debate ended with the 462-42 vote to start the seminary.

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Alliance postpones
vote on delegates

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/7/89

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Alliance has postponed a decision on changing the way the young organization governs itself.

Alliance members voted Nov. 3 to send the governance proposal -- which would change the organization's policy-making apparatus from a town-meeting format to a delegate system -- back to its board of directors.

The Alliance currently conducts business during its annual convocation, which this year was held March 1-3 in Greenville, S.C. All Alliance members who attend the convocation are able to debate issues and vote.

Under the proposed system, the Alliance's state or regional chapters would elect delegates to an annual meeting, which would be held in conjunction with the convocation. Although the annual meeting would be open, only delegates could "conduct business ... and vote on proposals presented by the board of directors."

Speaking for the board, Alliance Executive Director Stan Hastey cited three reasons for the switch to delegates: it would encourage greater participation by the state and regional chapters; it would allow for "more informed debate," since the chapters could discuss issues in detail before delegates attend the annual meetings; and it would prevent the "need to institute some form of credentialling."

Bob Richardson, a layman from Raleigh, N.C., said: "This is the most important decision we will make in this meeting. I so value the right -- as a dues-paying member of the Southern Baptist Alliance who has paid my own way to sit through this meeting -- to vote."

If the proposal were approved, he added, members should "change the name to the Presbyterian Alliance."

Another layman, John Gilmer, said the change would discourage lay participation, since business would be conducted during the week and would not be available to most members.

Bryant Kendrick of Winston-Salem, N.C., noted the "crystallization of authority structure" in the Alliance is untimely. "I would hate to deny the 'coming home' feeling to many Southern Baptists, just because we're afraid of what they might do or say," he said.

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Near the end of the discussion, Hastey noted board members sensed the opposition. "There is no lifeblood invested. We want to do the will of the body," he said. "If you don't want it, we don't want it, either."

Members voted to refer the proposal back to the board "for further consideration."

In other matters, the Alliance:

-- Ratified a request that the board of directors consider changing the organization's name.

Citing an Alliance theme of inclusiveness, Roy DeBrand, professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., moved that the board be asked to study the idea of dropping "Southern" from the name, so that it would be "Baptist Alliance." The board is to report at the 1990 convocation.

-- Re-elected Anne Thomas Neil of Wake Forest as Alliance president.

Other officers are Becky Turner Lawson of Kirkwood, Mo., first vice president; Lee Gallman of Skokie, Ill., second vice president; Walter S. Coleman Jr. of Asheville, N.C., treasurer; and Dan Ivins of Birmingham, Ala., secretary.

-- Elected new members to the board of directors, who were to be chosen by their state or regional chapters.

-- Approved a motion directing "as many of us as will permit ourselves" to write letters to Bill Moyers and the Public Broadcasting System, supporting Moyers' television special, "The Battle for the Bible."

The week prior to the Alliance meeting, the Southern Baptist Executive Committee approved a motion critical of Moyers' show, which featured the convention.

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Speakers challenge Alliance
to examine purpose, identity

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/7/89

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Examine your purpose and identity, a string of speakers told the Southern Baptist Alliance during its annual convocation March 1-3 in Greenville, S.C.

The Alliance is a two-year-old organization of Southern Baptist Convention moderates who have expressed displeasure with their denomination's current conservative leadership. The Greenville meeting attracted 682 registered participants.

Catherine Allen, associate executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, challenged the Alliance to "move to the middle of the (convention's) stream, even at risk of losing public identity, in order to gain power to support the denomination."

Allen affirmed the SBC's mission boards as "the best in the world." The Home Mission Board "gives more opportunity than any other denominational entity to be involved in service," she said, noting 52 percent of 45,000 Southern Baptists involved in home missions last year were women. She also commended the Foreign Mission Board's global strategic planning for opening more opportunities for ministry.

Building around a theme of "heritage to hope," she described WMU's experience in seeing policies concerning women change through the years and encouraged the Alliance to continue to have hope for the denomination.

"The question is asked, 'Why doesn't WMU do something?'" she said. "WMU has made a statement in sticking with our denominational program. We have the grandest missions program in the world. It is not perfect, but it is ours. We would no more abandon it now than abandon a child who wrecked the family car."

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She mentioned Southern Baptists' 7,694 home and foreign missionaries and noted: "We have promised them that we will hold the ropes, and we will. We would not want to signal them in any way that their support is in question."

During a question-and-answer session, Allen was asked if WMU could "make a very affirming comment on the role of women as pastors and preachers." She responded: "I don't believe WMU has ever made a statement using those words and don't know if a majority would vote for it. But we have endorsed women in all forms of ministry. ... We have plowed new ground." She added she would "take your comment and reaction" -- a standing ovation -- back to the WMU.

Larry McSwain, dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's School of Theology in Louisville, Ky., urged the Alliance to analyze itself by asking three questions:

-- Is a new vision a vision for the SBC or the SBA -- for this denomination or a new denomination? "I think you decided your identity yesterday" with a vote to start a new seminary, McSwain said. "I heard more about the Eastern Seaboard than the Southern Baptist Convention."

-- Will a vision for the SBA be missional or institutional? "I hoped the SBA could fill gaps not filled elsewhere, to provide resources for congregations that don't fit" the typical SBC mold, he said, adding, "I still think that can be done." But if the Alliance's vision is institutional, it will compete with other institutions, he predicted.

-- How can you be consistent to (your) resources? "The SBA can be visionary only if that vision is rooted in your resources," McSwain said. "You have made a commitment to focus your resources in a particular direction (starting a seminary). If you fail, the SBA probably will die. It will take all your resources."

The Alliance's vote to start a new seminary was painful for him, McSwain said: "I come from an institution with more women than you will have students, with more tenured women faculty than you will have faculty, with more blacks than you will have students. ... Don't dream your vision out of a sense of understanding you are alone."

W. Randall Lolley, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and now pastor of First Baptist Church of nearby Raleigh, said his vision for the Alliance is "far too personal to be of much use to you."

Organizations "need, periodically at least, to be repotted," he said. "My vision for our denomination -- and I'm committed to it -- is to find ways to have some repotting happen. We need to keep what is a growing plant and jettison what's not."

Only two major national efforts have emerged within the SEC in the past 10 years, Lolley said, citing the Alliance and the "very fine" Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Both are efforts to repot this plant (the SBC), to bring about fruit-bearing," he said. "But suppose they (Baptists Committed) don't, we don't, succeed. ... Something like this Alliance has got to happen, and I'm glad we'll have a 10- to 12-year history."

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, urged the Alliance to ponder its "ambiguities" and drew four conclusions:

-- "The Southern Baptist Alliance is, and must be, a specifically purposive enterprise," he said. "Rationality and intentionality must be our hallmarks, not reaction and definition by 'who we're not' than 'who we are.'"

-- "The SBA will be a coalition of dissimilar elements. The cultural and religious pluralism of our day guarantees that. Our nature as a soul-freedom people locks us into this dissimilarity. More and more American religious bodies are uneasy coalitions of contradictory constituencies.

-- "The SBA and the SBC are, and will be, different," he added. They both contain the same four sociological types, but "functions of size, age, geography and leadership order the relative strengths of the ideal types differently."

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-- "Historically, dissent is what Baptists do best," he said, quoting Bill J. Leonard, professor of American church history at Southern Seminary. He continued the quote: "Perhaps we can now begin to speak in terms of establishment Baptists and dissenting Baptists, not fundamentalists or moderates. As the persecuted minority, moderates must be re-energized ... in reassertion of that most Baptist tradition: dissent."

Joseph Roberts, senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, challenged Alliance members to follow Martin Luther King Jr.'s pattern of ministry. King's father was pastor of Ebenezer Baptist for 44 years, and the slain civil rights leader was associate pastor.

Roberts said he discovered "the key to great living" by studying King's life. "Dr. King spent most of his ministry lifting sisters and brothers who could not repay him," Roberts said. "He never kept books on his goodwill. Why? Because he was a disciple of our Lord, Jesus Christ."

Author Will Campbell warned Alliance members to be wary of certitude. "Where did it come from?" he asked. "I have searched for it in biblical history, and I don't find it."

Instead, Christians should practice a faith that is active, he said, noting faith "has nothing to do with belief and everything to do with action." Consequently, Christians should focus on discipleship, not creeds, he added: "Discipleship is never moderate. It is always radical. Creeds are moderate. Discipleship is radical."

The Alliance also installed its new executive director, Stan Hastey. He formerly was chief of the Washington bureau of Baptist Press and associate executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and started with the Alliance Jan. 1.

"I've been surprised by joy" because of the warmth of his reception, Hastey told Alliance members. He noted both he and the young organization face questions about the future, predicting those questions most likely "will be answered incrementally as events unfold" in the SBC and in the Alliance.

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Funeral services
held for Johnston

Baptist Press
3/7/89

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Funeral services were held March 4 for Nolan Johnston, director of missions for the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans, who died of an apparent heart attack in his office March 1.

Johnston had expressed no ill health, said his secretary, Anne S. Cramer, who noted he had been joking with other office personnel about five minutes before he was found on the floor of the office.

Johnston became director of missions for the New Orleans association and Plaquemines Baptist Association May 1, 1978. Prior to that he was director of education and training for the associations for almost 11 years.

He formerly was minister of education at Main Street Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss.; Asheboro Street Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; and Green Memorial Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

He was a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

At the time of his death, he was a member of the urban training cooperative steering committee of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and as contract teacher in the School of Christian Training at New Orleans Seminary.

Johnston is survived by his wife, Edith; a daughter, Janez; and two sons, James and Jonathan.

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