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October 12, 1989

89-146

Southeastern Seminary takes  
step toward reconciliation

By Marv Knox

N-CO

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Faculty, trustees and administrators at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary took a first step toward reconciliation during an unprecedented workshop Oct. 9-10.

The three groups -- engaged in a two-year-old conflict that has threatened the seminary's accreditation -- reached a three-part "compromise" offered by outgoing trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley, a pastor from Rockville, Md.

They agreed to:

-- Place a moratorium on election of permanent faculty members until after the board's March meeting.

-- Instruct a special faculty/trustee task force to propose a new faculty-selection process which the trustees are to consider in March.

-- Allow President Lewis A. Drummond to maintain his prerogative to appoint temporary faculty as needed during the interim.

Faculty selection dominated discussion during the workshop, which was interwoven into the fall trustee meeting at the Wake Forest, N.C., school.

Disagreement over the faculty-selection process launched the conflict in October 1987. That was when the trustees' new conservative majority changed the way the seminary picks professors -- a move faculty and others believed was designed to ensure that only biblical inerrantists could be hired as professors.

That action reduced the faculty's power to determine faculty candidates, vesting more control with the president and a trustee committee. Then-President W. Randall Lolley, most administrators and some faculty subsequently resigned, and Southeastern's two accrediting agencies launched investigations.

The workshop this fall was part of a response to one of those agencies, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Planners said the workshop was designed to get all three parties talking about issues that divide them.

When it was over, participants agreed progress had been made. But faculty noted the process almost was undermined by four actions trustees took in their meeting.

First, trustees voted that the American Association of University Professors and its chapter at Southeastern Seminary "have no official standing with the seminary." The Southeastern chapter involves all but one full-time professor who were on the faculty prior to Drummond's tenure.

Second, they refused to allow "inclusive language guidelines" drafted by the faculty to be printed in the seminary's catalog, student handbook and directory.

Third, they agreed to consider at their March meeting a proposal that would name the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement as an official seminary document and would require all faculty candidates to affirm the statement prior to election or full-time employment. Current faculty signed the seminary's present doctrinal guidelines, the Articles of Faith -- also known as the Abstract of Principles -- and would not be required to sign the Baptist Faith and Message.

Fourth, they voted to open the small-group meetings in which faculty and trustees were to discuss seminary issues. At the faculty's request, they later consented to close those meetings as pre-arranged procedure indicated.

Despite those problems, participants said the time together was valuable.

Robert Cooley, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in suburban Boston and the workshop facilitator who was suggested by Southeastern's other accrediting agency, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, said the workshop ended on a high note.

"Change is accomplished through crisis, revolution or process," Cooley said. "I have seen in this process some movement toward change."

Trusteeship is a ministry, and faculty membership also is a divine calling, he added, urging members of both groups to respect one another.

Cooley called on Southeastern to adopt a "shared governance" model of operation, noting the difficulty with the faculty-selection process "is only symptomatic" of the larger problem of seminary governance.

Trustees, faculty and administration should be participants in shared governance, he added, explaining that this properly involves only three components: trustees and faculty on either side, with the president in the middle.

And the groups must continue to communicate, Cooley urged. "Design faculty input at every trustee meeting," he said.

Faculty, trustee and administration representatives came away from the meeting expressing a least guarded optimism.

New trustee Chairman James R. DeLoach, an associate pastor from Houston, said: "In the small-group meetings, faculty, administration and trustees had the very first opportunity to sit and face each other and ... speak candidly about agreements and disagreements. ... All of us are looking forward to the ongoing process of continuing this dialogue."

"The main thing accomplished in this workshop is a movement toward participatory governance," said Richard Hester, professor of pastoral ministry and a member of the ad hoc committee that planned the workshop. "Participatory governance would be a different way of going than during the last three years. If participatory governance works -- as it did during this workshop -- and there are concrete results, then there is hope for our situation."

Added Drummond: "For the first time since my administration, we have had honest, face-to-face, open conversation and an attempt to reach out to faculty and trustees. That's always the first step toward resolving conflict."

Thomas A. Bland, professor of Christian ethics and sociology and a member of the ad hoc committee that planned the workshop, said: "I am encouraged. We have been able to talk. ... We are together at the point of what is best for this seminary. We want it to thrive, not just survive."

The process now continues, with the ad hoc planning committee -- three professors, three trustees, Drummond and Cooley -- acting as the task force to deal with accreditation issues. A primary task will be to draft the proposed faculty-selection process by Feb. 1, but the committee also will look at other points raised by the accrediting agencies. The group will meet again Nov. 10-11.

Transcripts of trustee, faculty and administration assessments of the workshop -- all delivered during the final session -- are to be sent to the Southern Association, along with a cover letter from Drummond describing the meeting and the consensus achieved.

The Southern Association is to meet in early December to determine the status of Southeastern's accreditation, and that decision is expected to be handed down Dec. 12.

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Drummond and G. Thomas Halbrooks, professor of church history and president of Southeastern's American Association of University Professors chapter, expressed hope that the workshop would help the seminary's cause.

"Whatever the outcome, the fact that we've had this dialogue will be crucial," Halbrooks said. "I see us as taking a very positive step. As we continue those steps, it is less significant what the level of those (Southern Association) sanctions might be," because progress is being made.

"I won't presume a full answer," Drummond added. "We talked. We had good dialogue. Surely this will be looked at positively."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following sidebar amplifies the four points of potential conflict between trustees and faculty that were mentioned in the story above.

4 Disagreements almost derail  
Southeastern Seminary progress

By Marv Knox

N-10

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Four points of disagreement almost derailed progress made in the reconciliation between faculty, administration and trustees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, according to faculty members.

The progress was made during an unprecedented workshop involving the three groups on the seminary campus in Wake Forest, N.C., Oct. 9-10. The workshop was interwoven into the trustees' regular fall meeting.

Four actions taken by trustees caused them to consider whether to complete the workshop, faculty members said. Those actions were:

-- A 19-7 vote on a motion declaring that the American Association of University Professors and its Southeastern Seminary chapter "have no official standing with the seminary." Trustees tabled a proposal to recommend that Drummond "not make available the use of seminary facilities and personnel" to AAUP.

James W. Bryant, a pastor from Fort Smith, Ark., and chair of the trustee instruction committee, urged the "no official standing" motion. The AAUP is an "outside group" that has treated the seminary unfairly, he said, noting the trustees are responsible for the "protection of the seminary from outside forces."

"This is unnecessarily inflammatory at a time when we're about to get beyond a very difficult situation," countered Mark Caldwell, a pastor from Hyattsville, Md. Added Robert Shirley, a retired pastor from Tupelo, Miss.: "This won't stop it (the local AAUP chapter). All we're doing is declaring war on them today."

"We're not declaring war," responded Calvin Partain, a pastor from Gallup, N.M. "We're not telling the faculty they cannot be members. ... We're doing what the accreditation agencies asked us to do -- protect the seminary from outside forces."

The trustees' action was "very distressing," said G. Thomas Halbrooks, professor of church history and president of Southeastern's AAUP chapter. "It misunderstands who we are as AAUP. The faculty they related to in the workshop is AAUP.

"The chapter was formed because we have no mechanism to meet just as a faculty. Only the president can call a faculty meeting. AAUP is a means to meet as a group and air faculty issues."

The chapter includes all but one professor who were on the faculty prior to October 1987, Halbrooks said. The newer faculty are being invited to join.

-- Trustee refusal to allow a faculty-adopted statement on "inclusive language guidelines" to be printed in seminary publications.

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As presented to the trustees, the faculty initiative included the four-page guidelines and a two-paragraph statement -- which the faculty proposed to be published in the seminary's catalog, student handbook and directory -- about the guidelines.

The guidelines primarily deal with the use of gender in nouns and pronouns. They encourage avoiding generic nouns that end in "-man," gender-specific pronouns and titles that specify marital status.

But the sticking point for trustees apparently was a section on language about God. The guidelines suggest avoiding the exclusive use of "he" or "she" for God. They urge using "a variety of sex-specific metaphors or similes for God," such as a father who welcomes a prodigal son home and a woman who searches for a lost coin.

Bryant sought passage of a motion that would "decline to approve" the guidelines as "official seminary policy," noting the controversial nature of language about God. "We don't need to get into that," he said.

Trustees then voted 14-4 not to even consider the motion but agreed by common consent that the "document on inclusive language could not be printed in any of the seminary publications."

"It's a difficult thing; we struggle very much with language," Halbrooks said later. "We agree the Bible uses feminine metaphors for God, as well as male. ... God is bigger than maleness and femaleness. One of the problems of language is to portray the greatness of God."

The faculty did not ask for the guidelines to be an official seminary statement, he said, noting professors only proposed the publication of the two-paragraph statement that announces the faculty developed the guidelines and that encourages use of inclusive language.

-- Agreement to consider in their March trustee meeting a proposal that would make the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 an official document of the seminary and would require all faculty candidates to affirm the statement prior to election or full-time employment

Current faculty signed the seminary's present doctrinal guidelines, the Articles of Faith, also known as the Abstract of Principles. They would not be required to sign the Baptist Faith and Message, according to the proposal.

President Lewis A. Drummond noted that a motion asking the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries to take steps to replace their current doctrinal statements with the Baptist Faith and Message was made at the 1988 SBC annual meeting. However, since the motion was not approved but merely referred to the trustees, it requires only a response and not compliance, he said.

L. Russ Bush III, academic vice president and dean of the faculty, noted many Southern Baptists prefer the Baptist Faith and Message because its interpretations of doctrines are more detailed than the Abstract's.

Halbrooks told Baptist Press the trustee proposal was "most distressing" for two reasons:

"The 1859 statement (Abstract) is as fine a confessional document as has ever been drawn by a Baptist. It walks the fine line between a confessional statement regarding who we are and what we stand for on one hand and freedom of conscience on the other.

"Also, to add another document creates two classes of professors. It subtly implies some are less acceptable on this campus" and could cause "division among the faculty." The two professors hired during Drummond's tenure also agreed that a second document is not needed, he said.

Southeastern professors do not need to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message in addition to the Abstract because "there is no substantial theological difference between the two documents," Halbrooks said.

-- A trustee vote to open the session of the workshop in which small groups of faculty and trustees were to sit down face-to-face and discuss issues that divide them.

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"We should conduct our business in the open," said Robert D. Crowley, a pastor from Rockville, Md., who concluded his term as trustee chairman during the meeting. "To close our meetings violates our own documents."

The ad hoc committee that planned the workshop -- comprised of three trustees, three faculty, Drummond and facilitator Robert Cooley, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in suburban Boston -- previously agreed the small-group meetings would be closed, Halbrooks noted. "We conducted frank discussions. We said things to each other that we would not have felt comfortable saying in open meetings," he said.

At the beginning of the small-group meetings, Drummond and Cecil D. Rhodes Jr., a retired physician from Wilson, N.C., and a trustee member of the ad hoc planning committee, went from room to room asking participants to close the sessions. "I feel if we change this part of the dynamic, it's going to scuttle the process," Drummond said.

The meetings of all six groups were closed.

During the final combined session, after trustees met as a group, Arlie McDaniel, a pastor from Moscow, Idaho, and another member of the ad hoc planning committee, told the faculty the vote to close the small-group meetings was an oversight: "It was certainly not any desire to go against that (previous agreement). I'm sorry it occurred, and I hope you understand."

"Most of what I have heard today indicated we could not reach consensus," said Elizabeth Barnes, professor of theology, recounting trustee decisions regarding inclusive language, the AAUP chapter and the Baptist Faith and Message. However, "we may have achieved a breakthrough," she said, citing the consensus agreement to work on modifying the seminary's faculty-selection process.

Echoed Halbrooks: "At the end of the board meeting, with some of the decisions made, I was not sure it was worth continuing the process. After discussion (directly with trustees), I became more hopeful. Some of my hopefulness is restored."

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FMB elects Kammerdiener  
executive vice president

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/12/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Donald R. Kammerdiener was unanimously elected executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Oct. 11 by the board's trustees.

Kammerdiener, 53, a former missionary and currently vice president for mission work in the Americas, was nominated for the post by board President R. Keith Parks. He will succeed William R. O'Brien Jan. 1, 1990.

O'Brien, who will become special assistant to Parks, asked to be relieved of the executive vice presidency when his wife, Dellanna O'Brien, was named executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. The O'Briens have moved to Birmingham, Ala., where she assumed her new job Sept. 1.

O'Brien will oversee the board's denominational relations, serve as liaison with other evangelical groups in the board's world evangelization efforts and participate in the board's global strategy group.

The role of the executive vice president will expand in January to include administration of day-to-day operations of the board, which has an annual budget of about \$175 million, oversees some 3,800 missionaries in 116 countries and employs about 450 home office personnel. Top administrators will report to Kammerdiener but have access to Parks. Kammerdiener also will represent Parks in his absence.

Parks initiated the change, which grew out of an internal staff study, to free himself to concentrate on broad policy, world mission strategy and long-range planning.

Kammerdiener, a 27-year veteran of foreign missions, said he was asked by trustees about his views on Scripture, theology and missiology. "I think that's very appropriate," he said.

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"I was not asked publicly, formally or informally by any trustee what political party in the denomination I stand for," he said in reference to broad support he received. "I think that's very appropriate."

Kammerdiener, an Oklahoma native reared in Kansas City, Mo., has been vice president for the Americas since 1987. He formerly was area director for Middle America and the Caribbean, 1980-87; and field representative for eastern Spanish-speaking South America, 1970-80. In the latter post he also directed evangelism and missions for the Argentine Baptist Convention and taught missions at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

He and his wife, the former Meredith Ruch of Kansas City, were appointed missionaries to Colombia in 1962. He held such positions as pastor-director of the Christian Cultural Center in Cali, national coordinator for the Crusade of the Americas evangelistic campaign, field missionary in the Colombian department (state) of Valle, treasurer of the Colombia Baptist mission and trustee vice president of International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali.

Before missionary appointment, Kammerdiener was pastor of churches in Richville, Okla., and Kansas City, and assistant pastor of a church in Independence, Mo.

He received the bachelor of arts degree from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and the master of divinity degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City. He received Oklahoma Baptist University's Alumni Achievement Award in 1987 and the Joe L. Ingram School of Christian Service Award in 1986. He was named an Alumnus of the Year at Midwestern in 1982.

The Kammerdieners have five children and are members of Ridge Baptist Church, Richmond.

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

FMB committee will discuss  
purchase of Belgian property

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/12/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted Oct. 11 to study the pros and cons of purchasing property now occupied by the Belgian Center for Biblical Education near Brussels, Belgium.

The action grew out of a motion by trustee Ron Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Thousand Oaks, Calif. Wilson's motion urged the board to investigate purchase of the property quickly to head off possible acquisition of it by a non-Christian group.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, said in June that he had ended efforts to buy the financially troubled evangelical school in Belgium following months of negotiations with the school's trustees. He said he did so because of difficulty in raising a reported \$5 million to purchase the school and endow its future operation.

Patterson also is a Foreign Mission Board trustee, but his efforts to buy the Belgian school had no direct connection with the board. His attempts to purchase the school drew criticism from FMB President R. Keith Parks and several European Baptist leaders, who said the purchase would bypass European Baptists and create possible divisiveness.

FMB Trustee Chairman Mark Corts ruled that discussion of Wilson's proposal be held at the trustees' December meeting by the committee responsible for mission work in Europe, rather than by a special committee Wilson asked Corts to select from the Europe, finance and strategy committees. Wilson agreed and trustees sustained Corts' ruling by a 4-to-1 vote.

Corts, however, asked leadership of those committees -- and other trustees -- to participate in the deliberations of the Europe committee. Board staff members also would be expected to participate, he said.

Parks and Isam Ballenger, regional vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, both objected to the approach in handling the matter.

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Parks, citing longstanding board policy, said initiatives on such matters should evolve from strategies by missionaries and overseas Baptists, not from the floor of a trustee meeting without advance input. "If we explore it this way, we will leave the impression around the world that we have decided to determine unilaterally what we will do about properties and institutions," he said.

Ballenger expressed concern that a December discussion would not allow time to consult European Baptist leaders. "I would be embarrassed if we did that without further consultation with our European partners," he said.

A decision by trustees to purchase the property could project the board into a conflict currently surrounding the Belgian school, Ballenger said.

"There's a lot of ill feeling" in Europe about disposal of the property, he said. "There are charges and countercharges about who's trying to control the school (and) who's negotiating with whom. It's not a pretty situation."

But Corts emphasized the December meeting would simply begin a process of hearing facts and gathering information and would not result in a decision.

"This is a discussion, simply an airing of the matter," Corts said. "We would assume the process would involve some consultation and following of appropriate channels. We affirm our European partners and want to send no wrong message to them."

Wilson said his motion involved purchase of the property, not of the seminary on the property, so that the site could be used for ministries which would advance evangelistic efforts in Europe.

Reasons favoring purchase of the property, he said, include its strategic location in Europe, its current cost and escalating value, and the usability of the property for a wide range of evangelistic and training opportunities. Such use, he said, could include leasing the property or a portion of it back to the school now occupying it. Another option, he said, could include making room for the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, if that school has to move because of restrictive Swiss laws.

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FMB elects exec VP, cites  
advances made in 1980s

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

Baptist Press  
10/12/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board elected an executive vice president, discussed a proposal to purchase school property in Belgium and commended Southern Baptist churches, pastors and missionaries for outstanding results.

In other action at their Oct. 11 meeting, trustees voted a \$174.9 million budget for 1990, appointed 38 new missionaries, honored 72 retiring missionaries, heard reports of world evangelism efforts and listened to a note of caution on a downward trend in missionary appointments.

Donald R. Kammerdiener, vice president for mission work in the Americas, was unanimously elected executive vice president-elect to succeed William R. O'Brien. O'Brien asked to be relieved of the executive vice presidency when his wife, Dellana O'Brien, was named executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. O'Brien, who will work out of Birmingham, Ala., will become a top special assistant to board President R. Keith Parks Jan. 1.

Parks said the executive vice president's role will expand in January to include direction of the board's day-to-day operations to free the president to concentrate on broad mission policy, world mission strategy and planning. Kammerdiener, a 27-year foreign missions veteran, also will represent Parks in his absence.

The budget, which will support some 3,800 missionaries in 116 countries, represents a \$7.2 million increase over 1989 -- built on rising revenues from Southern Baptists' annual Lottie Moo Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

While an upturn in Lottie Moon giving has brightened budget prospects, missionary appointment statistics emphasize "a bright amber caution light" for the years ahead, said Harlan Spurgeon, vice president for mission personnel.

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Spurgeon urged trustees to join in an effort to turn around what could develop into a serious downward trend in missionary appointments. The number of missionaries appointed annually has declined by an average of 4.6 percent during each of the past three years. If that trend continues, Southern Baptists will fall short of their Bold Mission Thrust global evangelism campaign goal to have 5,000 missionaries working on the field in the year 2000, he warned.

This year the board expects to assign about 310 new missionaries, down 61 from 1988, he said, noting that the board could end this year with a net loss of missionaries for the first time since 1972. Last year's net gain of 28 was the smallest recorded so far in this decade.

The resolution commending churches, pastors and missionaries cited great advancements in the 1980s in giving, missionary appointments, volunteer service, baptisms and church starts. Trustees reaffirmed efforts "to share the gospel with a lost world" and encouraged Southern Baptists "to increase their support for missions through praying, giving and responding to the call of God to take the gospel into all the world."

Trustees voted to study the pros and cons of purchasing property now occupied by the Belgium Center for Biblical Education near Brussels, Belgium. The action grew out of a motion by trustee Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif., who said the property could be used for evangelistic impact in Europe.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, said in June that he had ended efforts to buy the financially troubled evangelical school in Belgium following months of negotiations with the school's trustees. He said he did so because of difficulty in raising a reported \$5 million to purchase the school and endow its future operation.

Discussion of Wilson's proposal will be held at the trustees' December meeting by the committee responsible for mission work in Europe, with other appropriate trustees and staff members participating.

Parks and Isam Ballenger, vice president for work in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, objected to the approach in handling the matter because they said it bypasses longstanding policy and may create divisiveness overseas. Parks said such action should originate from strategies on the field rather than on the floor of a trustee meeting. "If we explore it this way, we will leave the impression around the world that we have decided to determine unilaterally what we will do about properties and institutions," Parks said.

But FMB trustee Chairman Mark Corts said the December meeting would not result in a final decision but would simply begin a process of hearing facts and gathering information, including input from overseas.

The board also heard plans for major city evangelistic efforts in two strategic world cities, Buenos Aires in Argentina and Hong Kong. Kammerdiener outlined a five-year plan for Buenos Aires, where missionaries will work with Argentine Baptists in seeking to establish 600 home Bible studies and 50 new missions, with a goal of five of these becoming fully self-supporting churches during the emphasis.

Bill Wakefield, vice president for work in Asia, told of missionary plans to work with Hong Kong Baptists in stimulating growth from a present level of 38,000 Baptists in 80 churches to 100,000 members in 500 churches. With Hong Kong returning to Chinese rule in 1997, Wakefield emphasized, the three-year effort is strategically important. This kind of growth is not possible by human efforts, he said, and he challenged trustees to pray that it can be accomplished through the "power of God."

Emphasizing the power of prayer, the Foreign Mission Board dedicated its new prayer room, named after William E. Davidson, a Missouri native and former missionary to Chile. Davidson, described as a longtime "prayer warrior," conducted a prayer ministry for missionaries until he died in 1987 at the age of 96 in Shonto, Ariz.

The board also presented a plaque to his daughter, Virginia Davidson Fischer of Phoenix, Ariz., for the care and support she gave her father in his final years.

Davidson, who viewed prayer for missions as God's assignment to him when he could no longer work overseas himself, prayed for hundreds of missionaries daily. His prayer list on aging, tattered sheets of paper became legendary. When he wasn't exercising or working in his yard, he usually was praying. He also wrote letters to about 700 missionaries regularly.



Golden Gate trustees  
affirm academic dean

By Eddy Oliver & Herb Hollinger

N- (CO  
(GGTS)

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's academic dean, criticized by Southern Baptist Sunday School Board trustees for an article which appeared in one of the board publications, was affirmed by the seminary's board of trustees during their regular fall meeting, Oct. 10-11.

Robert L. Cate was criticized by SSB trustees for an article, "The Development of Monotheism," which appeared in the Biblical Illustrator, a Sunday school teacher's resource magazine.

The article was published without any substantive changes, following an examination by the board's doctrinal reader, seminary President William O. Crews said. Cate was requested to "survey the development of Israel's belief in one supreme God in the midst of cultures which practiced pantheology," Crews added.

Golden Gate trustees approved a motion, with two dissenting votes, which affirmed Cate, saying the article did not violate the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement. Trustees noted that Cate had reaffirmed that the Bible has "truth without any mixture of error for its matter," a key phrase in the statement of faith.

The two dissenting trustees opposed the motion because they felt board trustees were unfair and that the criticism of Cate was inappropriate. Saying the Sunday School Board trustees "owe us an apology," Carolyn Self of Atlanta and Norman Taylor of Silver Spring, Md., asked to have their dissenting votes recorded in the minutes.

During an August board meeting in Glorieta, N.M., the Sunday School Board adopted without opposition a recommendation that trustees "disagree with the article because it is inconsistent with the biblical revelation; and we recommend that as soon as possible a new article reflecting the biblical view of monotheism be printed in the Biblical Illustrator."

In presenting the motion to seminary trustees, Dick Lincoln of Columbia, S.C., said, "We needed to act, especially because of what the Sunday School Board (trustees) did." Recognizing the article was controversial and difficult for all concerned, Lincoln said he hoped the notion was something seminary trustees could "live with."

Prior to receiving the recommendation from the executive committee, trustees met in executive session to discuss procedures to handle the motion. The recommendation and motion were then discussed in plenary session.

Taylor said the way the situation developed was "inappropriate and unfair" on the part of board trustees and "I strongly affirm and support this man."

Robert Lewis, trustee from Fairfield, Calif., said he did receive some letters of protest over the article and although he personally disagreed with Cate's interpretation, he felt the motion by trustees was "a good statement."

"I don't feel he has violated any principles of Scripture ... (Cate) is a great man of God and I love him. Let's put it behind us," Lewis said.

Toney Anderson, trustee from Renton, Wash., identified himself as a layman and asked: "What's the big deal? This is very close to creedalism, in my opinion."

"The whole thing is a disaster. I wish we could ignore it ... the Sunday School Board (trustees) did us a disservice -- a travesty," he said.

Commenting on the board's action, Crews said, "I believe our board took a firm position by affirming (Cate) as an individual, a Christian educator and a brother, while at the same time acknowledging obvious disagreements in individual interpretation."

When contacted by Baptist Press, Cate declined to comment.