



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 1, 1990

90-60

Honeycutt reassures  
Southern students

By Pat Cole

N-CO  
(SBTS)

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt promised the school's students their education will not be disrupted by actions adopted by a new conservative majority on the seminary's board of trustees.

"The nature of the playing field was changed this week, but the game of theological education is still on at Southern Seminary," Honeycutt told about 800 students at a forum held April 23, one day after the annual meeting of the seminary's trustees in Louisville, Ky.

"I want to assure you that there is not a student here who will not continue to get the same quality and excellence in your education that you have received to this point," he said.

The April 23-25 trustee meeting sent tremors through the seminary community after conservatives moved swiftly to gain control of the 63-member board. With a working majority of at least eight votes, conservatives swept three of the board's four trustees offices, successfully challenged three of four re-elections to the board's executive committee and blocked three interim appointments to the board. Trustees also adopted a pro-life statement on abortion, approved statements critical of two professors and established a policy allowing students to tape record any class.

Honeycutt said the new conservative majority controlled "every substantive issue they wanted to control" at the board meeting and noted, "I don't think that will change." The 63-year-old president, however, underscored the seminary's commitment to "quality theological education."

In responding to students' questions, Honeycutt cautioned against "a panic reaction on your part or (on the part of) faculty or staff to a change in the dynamics of the board. We have got to keep calm, go on with our work and keep the focus on quality theological education for you as a student. That's why the institution is here."

Institutions, he emphasized, change slowly: "Institutions have personalities just like we do as individuals and there is something about an institution that somehow survives all kinds of illnesses and difficulties and keeps its faith and goes on."

Rather than be anxious about their own education, students should "invest your worry in what will be here in the 21st century," he said.

Honeycutt said he is convinced the faculty remains dedicated to providing sound theological education.

"I believe this faculty is as much committed to quality as they were before this week," he stressed, adding that "we are as much committed to inclusiveness as we ever were."

Honeycutt referred to trustee actions regarding Christian ethics professor Paul Simmons and church history professor E. Glenn Hinson as "perhaps the most serious matters coming out of the (board) meeting."

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In executive session, trustees asked Honeycutt to express to Simmons their disapproval of "the harm done this seminary" by Simmons' public activities related to abortion, adding that "his continued activities in this area may be considered sufficient grounds for dismissal." Simmons' public statements on abortion rights have drawn increasing criticism in recent years from pro-life advocates.

The board also voted to express "deep concern" to Hinson for "intemperate comments about controversial issues which negatively affect the public perceptions of Southern Seminary." In addition to concerns about Hinson's criticism of conservative leaders in the denomination's 11-year-old controversy, trustees also cited his advocacy of shifting distribution of funds to denominational boards and agencies away from the national Cooperative Program to state conventions.

Honeycutt described the action regarding class tape recordings as "most unfortunate." He said some classes involve "intimate kinds of discussions" that "you don't want taped and played back five years later."

He said he hoped trustees will "see the wisdom" of rescinding or modifying the policy "so we can exempt some areas."

Honeycutt said he doubts trustees will revive a motion to interpret the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's governing doctrinal statement, according to later writings of one of the Abstract's authors. A motion from first-year trustee Jerry Johnson of Aurora, Colo., would have interpreted the statement's section on the inspiration of Scripture in light of an 1888 book by Basil Manly Jr., one of the seminary's four original faculty members. The trustees' decision to postpone the motion indefinitely "signals they were not willing to go down that road," Honeycutt said.

Honeycutt cautioned against a student letter writing campaign to seminary trustees. "Don't throw down the gauntlet to the board of trustees," he said. "That's my plea."

Instead, he encouraged students to respond in ways that focus on trustees' responsibility for policy making rather than inviting "direct involvement" in the operation of the seminary.

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Vestal draws endorsement  
of retired missionaries

By Toby Druin

N-CO  
(Texas Std.)

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

DALLAS (BP)--After hearing he had won the endorsement of more than 300 retired missionaries, Daniel Vestal outlined a plan for "renewal and refocus in the Southern Baptist Convention.

During a rally at Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, Vestal, the moderate candidate for president of the SBC, also pledged an "inclusive" philosophy of appointments if he is elected at the annual meeting, scheduled June 12-14 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

"You need to hear me well," Vestal told more than 400 people who attended the rally. "If I am elected, I pledge to you that my appointive philosophy will be an inclusive philosophy.

"I mean by that I am not going to shut out people who have shut out folks like me for 11 years. I am not going to shut them out."

Since 1979, conservative presidents have been elected at the annual meetings and through their appointive powers, Vestal and others have charged, have virtually assured that only people of like mind have been elected to SBC boards, commissions and committees.

Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, was nominated for the SBC presidency in 1989, but lost to incumbent president Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., 10,754 to 8,248.

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Vestal announced last September he will be nominated again in New Orleans.

Vines, completing his second one-year term as president, is ineligible for re-election, but Houston pastor John Bisagno announced in February he will nominate Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, as president.

Both Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, and Chapman have spoken out for "enlarging the tent" of leadership in the SBC to include any who believe in the "perfect Bible." Several pastors -- including Peace Committee Chairman Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., -- have endorsed Bisagno's plan. Many, including Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and Peace Committee member Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., have endorsed both the plan and Chapman's candidacy.

Vestal, also a member of the Peace Committee and, like Chapman, a biblical inerrantist, announced in May 1989 that if he were elected his presidency would be marked by a "winner share all" attitude that would include even some of the current conservative leaders.

At the April 27 rally, Park Cities church Pastor James L. Pleitz described Vestal as "a man who can bring us together, who hasn't lost sight of our mission as Southern Baptists."

Pleitz also read a letter from Richard Jackson endorsing Vestal's candidacy. Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, was the moderate candidate in 1987 and 1988, losing to Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., in 1987, and to Vines in 1988.

Jackson expressed "unqualified confidence" in Vestal, whom he described as "a Christian gentleman of impeccable integrity and a Baptist with unquestioned commitment to biblical theology, evangelical compassion and missionary zeal."

The Arizona pastor said it is his prayer "that Southern Baptists will not pass up the privilege of having his (Vestal's) leadership."

Finlay Graham, retired Southern Baptist missionary to the Middle East and North Africa, presented Vestal with a resolution of support for his candidacy with the names of 304 retired Southern Baptist missionaries.

Graham told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, that he had personally telephoned the missionaries over a 10-day period, making phone calls for some six hours a day.

More than 90 percent of those he talked with were enthusiastic in their support of Vestal and "his efforts to unify the Southern Baptist Convention and to direct it again toward its primary task of world missions."

Vestal told rally participants he was "unapologetically asking for your support. As you go to New Orleans, make sure your church has its full contingent of messengers."

The former Texan, who moved to Georgia in 1988 after having been pastor of First Baptist Church of Midland, said there must be a change in the denomination. Anyone whose scenario for reconciliation in the SBC in the future does not recognize the need for political change "is being at least naive and at worst dishonest," he said.

"There has to be change. For the past 11 years a movement has controlled this denomination in such a way that if you are not willing to perpetuate that control you are not allowed to be a participant in the decision-making process and leadership of the denomination.

"That is not Baptist; indeed, it is not Christian," he said.

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If he is elected, Vestal said, his plan for the denomination -- which he labelled "Mission 2000" -- will be one to bring renewal in the SBC and to refocus the denomination on its original mission.

His five-point program includes a comprehensive mission strategy to redefine and rejuvenate Bold Mission Thrust, to mobilize laypeople, students and ethnic groups; to bring theological renewal; to address the major social and moral issues of the day, including abortion, secularism, materialism, the environment, ecology and problems facing families;

To find ways to help hurting churches and ministers; and to help the denomination recover authentic spirituality, personal piety and the meaning of corporate worship.

"I am asking not only for your vote and support," Vestal said, "but also for your prayers and help and cooperation so we can refocus this denomination for the purpose for which it was founded in 1845, the purpose of the evangelization of the world."

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Romanian evangelicals exploring  
evangelism via higher education

By Art Toalston

N- FMB

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Romanian evangelicals hope to start a Christian university to stir young people and future generations toward faith in Christ.

"This is a crucial time for our country," said Nicolae Gheorghita, a founder of the new Romanian Evangelical Alliance and pastor of Second Baptist Church in Oradea, Romania's largest Baptist congregation.

"Either we (evangelicals) will influence the younger generation, or secularism will, or Western culture will with sex and rock music," he said. Young Romanians also are vulnerable to appeals from Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and even Satanists, Gheorghita said during a visit to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va. "Whoever gets a solid foundation will influence much of the young generation," he stressed.

The Evangelical Alliance hopes to launch the Christian university next fall, Gheorghita said, noting, "If we have 10 students, it will be enough." The organization was created in late January by Baptists, other evangelical groups in Romania and representatives of the "Lord's Army," an evangelical movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church. The "Lord's Army" faced harsh persecution under the regime of longtime communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu, who was deposed and executed in December.

Romanian Baptists, meanwhile, are working to produce Christian literature for young people, start an evangelistic youth camp program and bolster the training of Sunday school teachers, Gheorghita said. Southern Baptists are undergirding these efforts by providing desktop publishing equipment and funds for Bibles from a \$1 million Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appropriation for evangelistic projects throughout Eastern Europe.

The university would focus on training teachers "to do a double job" of working in schools and "at the same time evangelizing villagers," Gheorghita explained. Thousands of villages need this sort of witness in the country of 23 million people, he noted. The university also could help train pastors.

Numerous evangelicals could be university instructors, he said. Several uncertainties face the venture, however. A site must be found, and some financial help from Christians in the West must be secured.

Also, evangelicals may face difficulties with the new government formed after the May 20 parliamentary elections, Gheorghita said. One of the groups seeking popular support is the National Salvation Front, which has been in power since Ceaucescu's ouster. The front includes a number of officials from the former communist regime.

"All the structures in the whole society have been communist," Gheorghita commented. "Maybe God has to do another miracle" for democracy to prevail in the country, he said.

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Still another threat he sees on the horizon is the Romanian Orthodox Church. An Orthodox leader called Protestants "the cancer of the backbone of the nation" in a recent national broadcast, he recounted.

Orthodox are seeking to regain the power they held before the rise of communism -- power that often took the form of persecution of Protestants, Gheorghita said. They claim some 18 million members in Romania but draw fewer worshipers than evangelicals, he noted.

If they succeed in regaining their former influence in Romania, "Orthodox will do us more harm than the communists," Gheorghita said.

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High Court rejects challenge  
to church's tax-exempt status

By Kathy Palen

N- BJC

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has rejected an appeal by a group of abortion-rights advocates that challenged the tax-exempt status of the U.S. Catholic Church.

Without comment, the high court May 30 refused to review a decision by the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled the group did not have legal standing to sue the Internal Revenue Service and Treasury Department for failing to revoke the Catholic Church's tax exemption.

The 10-year legal battle began when Abortion Rights Mobilization, along with 20 other individuals and groups, challenged the tax-exempt status of the U.S. Catholic Conference and National Conference of Catholic Bishops. It claimed the church agencies violated a tax-code provision by campaigning against pro-choice candidates in the 1980 federal election.

When the church refused to comply with a district court's order to produce internal church documents, the judge issued a contempt citation, including \$100,000-a-day fines.

The church agencies appealed to the 2nd Circuit Appeals Court, which stayed the fines pending appeal. But the court held the church did not have standing to press the case.

The Supreme Court reversed that decision and sent the case back to the 2nd Circuit for further consideration.

The appeals court then dismissed the lawsuit, holding that the plaintiffs did not suffer a "particularized injury" by the alleged actions of the church and, therefore, could not bring a complaint.

"The real issue in ARM was who enforces the tax code," said Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. "If a church's political adversaries could drag it into court and force it to defend its exempt status, churches would be extremely skittish about speaking out on controversial political issues.

"While few Baptists would sanction a church's endorsement of candidates for public office -- as alleged in this case -- oversight of the IRS should belong to Congress and the president, not to individual taxpayers."

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Land criticizes Bush  
for inviting homosexuals

By Louis Moore

N- CO  
(CLC)

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land is asking Southern Baptists to write President George Bush and express outrage over a White House invitation to representatives of homosexual organizations.

The representatives were invited to witness Bush's signing at the White House of new federal legislation requiring records on hate crimes. That meeting occurred April 24.

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Afterwards, The Washington Post quoted Robert Bray of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force as saying, "We were stunned. No president has ever invited a group of gay and lesbian activists to the White House. We think the president sent a very clear message to bigots and bashers that he will not tolerate violence" against gays and lesbians.

Land said in a letter to Bush on April 30: "We do not want hate crimes either. Such acts of violence against people are wrong. It is quite another matter, however, for the president of the United States to invite leaders of homosexual and lesbian groups to be invited guests at an official White House ceremony precisely because they represent such groups.

"Such an action provides an implicit White House approbation of their life-style and it is something no previous administration has done."

Land said, "The White House should not be giving its sanction and implicit approval to such groups.

"The presidency, as Theodore Roosevelt so aptly noted, is a 'bully pulpit.' In allowing that pulpit to be used in this way, you have compromised your attempts to portray your administration as pro-family and you have diminished both the presidency and your administration," Land said.

"The question of the invitation was raised later at a White House briefing," Land said. "The White House staff responded that support for the invitation was far from unanimous, but that evangelicals and others concerned about the invitation should write the president directly about the matter."

"I encourage Southern Baptists across our nation who are offended by this action to write the president and let him know of their displeasure," said Land.

To write to Bush, letters should be addressed as follows: The President; The White House; Washington, D.C. 20500. The White House Comment Line is (202) 456-7639.

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Surgery gives Dilday renewed  
vision for Southwestern Seminary

By Scott Collins

F - (O)  
(SWBTS)

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Triple-bypass surgery has given Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Russell Dilday a "renewed vision" of theological education's task in Southern Baptist life.

Dilday, who returned to his duties at the Forth Worth, Texas seminary on a limited schedule April 23, said the surgery and recovery that followed have "made me more excited about the seminary than ever before. I think we'll be able to come through our struggles in a more positive way and be more effective in the future."

Dilday, 59, underwent surgery March 28 to relieve blockage of three cardiac arteries leading to his heart. He anticipates being back at "110 percent before the fall semester," which begins in August.

The experience of the past month has given him time to reflect on theological education in the Southern Baptist Convention. Those reflections "call you back to the basic task," he said. "As I watched those skilled physicans, I was reminded again how important it is for ministers to be equipped, too.

"That brings you back to the basic urgency of spreading the gospel and gives you a sense of excitement."

That excitement was ven greater, Dilday said, when he thought of Southwestern Seminary's role. "Southwestern is a major player in this effort because of the sheer number of students" he explained.

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In addition to his broader reflections, the leader of the world's largest seminary said he also gave time to spiritual renewal and his family.

He was drawn closer to his wife, Betty, and their three children and spouses, Dilday said. During his recovery at home, Dilday spent time reading, writing and studying, using a Bible study program on his computer.

He also continued writing on a book with his wife, to be published later this year. The book, according to Dilday, is for "young Timothies and their mates." It is a collection of sermons he has preached to seminary students during his 12 years as president of Southwestern.

One of the lessons Dilday is passing on to young ministers is to begin at an early age exercising and managing stress. "The ministry is a very stressful occupation," he said. "But there are ways to learn to deal with stress."

And while the surgery has given Dilday time to reflect, it also has given him an "unusual awareness of the heart's beating. It's caused me to think back on that one organ and God's wisdom in creating something that beats day-to-day, year-to-year."

Dilday's doctors have given him a good report, he said, referring to his recovery as "unusually rapid and strong." An examination of his heart during the surgery revealed it to be in "great condition," Dilday said.

Now that Dilday is recovering, he also is busy thanking people from around the world who showed an "outpouring of love and support." He received more than 800 cards and letters and nearly 80 floral arrangements.

For someone who has been on the giving end most of his life, Dilday said, the experience has renewed his view of the church's role of "undergirding people with support. You see this kind of thing happen to other people and think it's routine until you are on the receiving end."

That concern and support have reminded Dilday that "the church is a family of faith."

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CLear-TV ends boycott  
of Clorox but not Mennen

By Louis Moore

N-CO  
(CLC)

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--A group of U.S. Christian leaders is ending its boycott of The Clorox Corporation in the wake of promises from the giant company to reduce the amount of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian stereotyping on television shows it sponsors.

The group, known as Christian Leaders for Responsible Television (CLear-TV), began the boycott of Clorox last July after identifying the company as a leading sponsor of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian stereotyping on network television.

Clorox officials approached CLear-TV in February and asked that the boycott be lifted. The company has not said how dramatically its sales were impacted by the boycott. CLear-TV also is unable to put a dollar figure on the amount of sales affected by the boycott.

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and a member of the Executive Committee of CLear-TV, called the lifting of the boycott "a clear indication we have succeeded in attracting the attention of one of the nation's largest advertisers and persuading that company to stop the downward spiral in the moral quality of TV programming in this country."

He said Clorox is to be commended for its decision to overhaul its advertising practices and work cooperatively with concerned citizens. CLear-TV's executive committee voted to end the boycott, originally scheduled to last one year, after only nine months.

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The group's boycott of The Mennen Company, which went into effect simultaneously with the action against Clorox, remains in effect. Mennen has not announced any changes in its advertising practices and has not approached Clear-TV about the boycott, Land said.

Clear-TV Chairman Billy A. Melvin said Clorox admitted that the company did not enforce its previously established guidelines during the months before the boycott began. However, once the boycott started, the company began strict enforcement of its policies, he said.

Clear-TV's television monitoring program showed a 32 percent reduction from the spring of 1989 to the fall of 1989 in the amount of sex, violence, profanity and anti-Christian stereotyping on network television.

Melvin said the drop indicates that not only Clorox but also other companies responded to the boycott with restraint and concern.

Clear-TV is a coalition of about 1,600 Christian leaders from nearly every Christian body in the United States, including top leaders in more than 70 denominations.

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Baptist state convention presidents  
sponsor prayer breakfast at SBC

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

MURFREESBORO, Tenn, (BP)--The Baptist State Convention Presidents' Fellowship will sponsor a prayer breakfast prior to the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans.

The breakfast will be held at 7:30 a.m. Monday, June 11, at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans. Reservations will be available by invitation only.

F. Murray Mathis, president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the fellowship, said, "This is a time when presidents of state conventions and denominational leaders can join together to pray specifically for decisions that will be made at the convention."

Mathis, pastor of Third Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, said he hopes the prayer breakfast will set a positive tone for the 1990 convention.

The program for the breakfast will be led by T.W. Hunt and Avery Willis, of the SBC Sunday School Board; Henry Blackaby, SBC Home Mission Board; and Minnette Drumwright, SBC Foreign Mission Board. They are the prayer officers of the SBC.

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SBC can relate to others,  
Baptist historians told

By Marv Knox

N- CO

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Despite perceptions to the contrary, most Southern Baptists do not want to be isolated from the rest of Christianity, G. Thomas Halbrooks told a gathering of denominational historians.

Halbrooks described the "Roots of Southern Baptist Relationships with Other Denominations" during a combined meeting of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission and Southern Baptist Historical Society in Nashville April 23-25.

"Many have an image of Southern Baptists as being opposed to positive relationships with other denominations," said Halbrooks, professor of church history at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and president of the Historical Society. "Others have often perceived Southern Baptists to be isolated sectarians who consider themselves as having no need for relationships with anyone else.

"This has certainly not been the historic Baptist stance, nor does it represent the view of most Southern Baptists. ... Yet some Baptists have often acted in ways that have given support to the negative perspective."

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Halbrooks described five "roots" of the Southern Baptist Convention's relationships with other denominations:

-- "The Colonial Root was closely related to the English Baptist tradition," he said. "It held a more corporate view of the church and ... for the most part valued positive relationships with other denominations.

-- "The Frontier Root was primarily a product of the American frontier. Much more individualistic and independent, it saw little need for cooperative endeavors.

-- "The Eastern Root was the response ... to the new phenomenon of American denominationalism. It assumed the common denominator of all the major churches and sought to cooperate ... in the work of missions and benevolence.

-- "The response to American denominationalism on the expanding western frontier was the Western Root. Fiercely independent and sectarian, Baptists on the western frontier denied the common denominator of Christian churches. ... These Baptists claimed to be the only true church.

-- "The Southern Root ... demonstrated the impact of that culture on Southern Baptist life. With its individualism, biblicism, racism and provincialism, the Southern Root made it certain that the Western Root would join it in becoming dominant."

The varied nature of their root system causes Southern Baptists' relationships to other denominations to resemble a variegated plant, Halbrooks said. And although the Southern and Western roots generated independence, sectarianism and competitiveness, "one could consider it encouraging that Southern Baptists have had some positive relationships," he added.

"Southern Baptists may look to their Eastern and Colonial roots and there find guideposts that can point the way out of the darkness of their provincialism into the brightness of the broader community of the Christian faith," he urged, "where together they can seek ways to respond to the prayer of our Lord, 'that they may all be one.'"

Other speakers focused on specific kinds of relationships with other denominations.

Southern Baptists have not always "realized" the contributions of other Baptists, said Karen E. Smith, who examined relationships with other Baptist denominations.

"While Southern and Northern (now American) Baptists have often talked about cooperation, relatively little has been achieved," said Smith, assistant professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "Two factors were always present in creating tension: ... Baptist immigrants from the South and dissatisfaction by southern immigrants with churches in the North."

Regarding relationships with the larger Baptist community, Smith noted geography, culture, size, theology and ecclesiology as major factors.

She particularly cited Southern Baptists' affinity for the Landmark movement, "with its insistence on the local, visible church and belief that the kingdom of God and the church are coterminous" and its belief "that the purity of the church must be preserved" as a limiting factor. Further, an air of paternalism, when combined with the immense size of the SBC, has hurt relationships with black and overseas denominations, she added.

"The controversy which has dominated Southern Baptist life has resulted in division and lack of cooperation with other Baptists," she noted. "At the same time, it has also forced some Southern Baptists to look beyond the borders of the SBC for friendship and fellowship with other Baptists."

Although historically separate for a variety of reasons, Southern and Independent Baptists recently have drawn closer together, said Bill J. Leonard, the William Walker Brooks professor of American Christianity at Southern Seminary.

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The Independent Baptist movement is "a collection of fiercely autonomous local congregations which are fundamentalist in theology, Baptist in polity and separatist in their approach to ecclesiastical relationships," Leonard said. Feeling they have a mandate to "attack heresy wherever it appears," he added, "many Independent Baptists left the SBC because they felt that orthodoxy was undermined by the denomination's failure to enforce fundamentalism on its constituency."

"It is denominationalism, however, which most reflects the ideological differences between the two groups," he explained, citing missions methodology, seminary education and denominational uniformity as areas of disagreement.

Leonard affirmed Independent Baptists' assertion that "the day of the denomination is past" and noted their replacement by "large, super-aggressive churches" that are present among both groups. "Affinity between super-aggressive Independent and Southern Baptist churches, along with the expanding fundamentalist dominance of the SBC is evidence of a transition in relations between segments of both groups," he said.

But "rather than develop direct affiliation, certain fundamentalist congregations, whether Independent or Southern Baptist, have already and may continue to establish a kind of defacto 'dual alignment,'" he noted.

"Denominational exclusivism" aside, Southern Baptists have not been "perfectly insulated from the quest for Christian unity," said Timothy George, dean of the Beeson School of Theology at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., who discussed Southern Baptists' relationship with other Protestants.

"Southern Baptists have forged frontiers of fellowship with ... two distinct traditions of Protestant interdenominationalism: mainline ecumenism and conservative evangelicalism," George said. "In recent decades, Southern Baptists have become increasingly wary and even hostile toward the former while cautious but generally hospitable toward the latter. ...

"The past 15 years have been marked by increasing fellowship and cooperation between Southern Baptists and evangelicals. ... Heirs of a shared history, the two communities may also be linked in a common destiny."

Of relations with mainline Protestants, he added: "Until mainline ecumenism addresses with clarity ... fundamental issues of theology and mission, not to say the whole question of the authority of Scripture, it is doubtful whether Southern Baptists or many other evangelicals will be eager to board its faltering bandwagon. It would be a pity, however, were Southern Baptists to withdraw completely from the dialogue. It would be worse still; it would be an abandonment of our responsibility to bear witness to the light we have received."

Prior to World War II, most information that Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists had about each other was hearsay, said Glenn A. Igleheart, director of the Baptist Convention of New York's missions division and former interfaith witness director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Igleheart charted the "significant changes" that have occurred in their relationship in the last half-century, including developments within both denominations, formal relationships with each other and even intermarriage.

The broad neo-conservative movement in the United States most recently has brought Catholics and Baptists together, he said: "Baptists and Catholics find themselves at the same rallies for or against abortion and for or against government aid to parochial schools, day-care centers and other institutions. Consensus is not evident in either group, so positive similarities across denominational lines are stronger in some areas than within denominational boundaries."

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Looking ahead, he added: "Catholics and Southern Baptists enter the last decade of this century in a state of flux. Southern Baptists no longer define their identity as over against Catholics, but rather now clarify their differences with Catholics out of an understanding of their own identity. Catholics continue to explore the implications of Vatican II, and American Catholics ... fashion a distinctive approach to witness and ministry. ... Christ calls them both to witness in today's world."

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Baptist chaplains minister  
to city police on patrol

By Ken Camp

F-TEXAS

Baptist Press  
5/1/90

DALLAS (BP)--From cramped patrol cars cruising inner-city streets to hospital bedsides, from weddings to retirement banquets to funerals, nine Southern Baptist volunteer chaplains minister to the needs of Dallas police officers.

Currently, half of the volunteers serving with the Dallas Police Department's chaplaincy program are Southern Baptists. All devote a minimum of 16 hours a month to the program, but two veteran chaplains note actual time spent ministering to police officers and their families is more like 20 to 25 hours most months.

Danny Souder, pastor of Northlake Baptist Church in Dallas, has been a volunteer chaplain about four years. Walter Evans, pastor of First Baptist Church of Sunnyvale, has been a part of the program for 14 years.

"It's very fulfilling, getting to have a ministry with a segment of the community that is basically unchurched," said Souder.

In addition to counseling police officers and their families, chaplains also visit sick and injured officers, assist in delivering death notices, perform weddings and funerals and offer guidance in stress management, ethics and family relations.

"I ride along with the officers once or twice a month as they answer calls. Sometimes it's a mobile counseling situation. More often, it's just building friendship and rapport," Souder said.

Building relationships is the key to ministry with police officers, Souder and Evans agreed. These relationships develop over time, as chaplains accompany officers on patrol, join them on the firing range and visit with them around the coffee pot at the police station.

While riding in patrol cars, chaplains wear bulletproof vests under their clothes and carry identification badges.

Although most of the aid they offer to the police is spiritual, Evans recalled one time when he saved an officer's life.

"The officer got a call about a break-in at an apartment complex. The guard of the complex met us and said there was a window raised and someone was inside one of the apartments," Evans said.

Cautiously opening the apartment door, Evans and the officer saw a muscular young man asleep on the floor in front of a television. Assuming the suspect had passed out from alcohol or drugs, the policeman proceeded to roll him over and put on handcuffs. But when the first cuff clicked shut, the young man awakened and lashed out at the policeman.

"That boy was stout as a mule," Evans said. "He got the officer down and started choking him." Rushing to the officer's rescue, Evans grabbed the handcuff chain and jerked the suspect's restrained arm behind his back. Putting his knee in the young man's lower back, the chaplain managed to slip the other end of the handcuff onto the assailant's free arm.

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"Once he had the cuffs on, he calmed down and was gentle as could be," Evans said. "That officer told me later, 'I'd like to have you as a partner.'"

Evans quickly pointed out that kind of excitement is rare. Most of the hours spent with officers are simply devoted to getting acquainted and building trust.

"The biggest challenge is learning how to minister to police officers. They are a special breed," said Evans. Although a segment of the Dallas law enforcement community is made up of believers who are active in local churches and in the Fellowship of Christian Police Officers, Evans said most policemen do not feel comfortable or accepted in church.

"The officers would say: 'Most ministers don't understand my job. They don't understand the pressure. They don't understand the terrible boredom. They don't understand the riff raff I have to put up with all day,'" Evans said.

"Patrolmen deal with derelicts, drug addicts and prostitutes all day. Then at the end of their shift, unless they learn how to shift gears, they go home and try to be policemen there. That's one reason police officers have such a high divorce rate."

The chaplains noted the high incidence of marital conflict, suicide, alcohol abuse and burnout among law enforcement officers.

"Police officers are taught to portray a macho image of being self-reliant and self-sufficient. But they have problems and pressures just like anyone else. Still, it's hard breaking through that blue veneer," said Souder.

Although both Souder and Evans have led a few officers and their family members to make professions of faith in Christ, the numbers are not great. Nevertheless, they see their ministry as having a significant impact on the law enforcement community.

"The officers appreciate the fact that we care. And the more we're known by them, the better the chance is that they'll know who to call when they have a problem," Evans said.

"As tough as these guys seem, when the times are rough, they're glad to see a chaplain."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following paragraph can be inserted in the BP story released 4/27/90, "Fighting in Liberia's Nimba County forces Baptist churches to close." An update story may be released later in the week of April 30.

Mission administrators gave the go-ahead April 27 for missionaries in Liberia to leave the country if necessary. Many of the missionaries are expected to make travel arrangements, but will not leave unless the situation makes departure necessary.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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