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90-144

Texas Baptist executive board
studies relationship with Baylor

By Ken Camp

N-DEAS

DALLAS (BP)--In a called meeting Oct. 17, the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas named a special 26-member committee to examine the legal, financial and relational issues arising from recent actions by the trustees of Baylor University distancing the school from convention control.

The Baylor board of trustees on Sept. 21 revised its charter to establish a board of regents "with sole responsibility for governance of Baylor" and elected 16 people to the new body. Previously, Baylor's charter provided for school governance by a 48-member board of trustees, elected by the BGCT.

The committee on the BGCT/Baylor relationship was named to study the Baylor trustees' action and to recommend responses by the BGCT and its coordinating entities for education and human welfare institutions. Legal and other counsel will be retained to assist in the study.

The first major assignment of the committee, chaired by Robert Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, is to study Texas Baptist Cooperative Program funding for Baylor.

The committee will make recommendations to appropriate committees and boards of the BGCT for action, and it will present changes that require convention approval to the annual BGCT meeting in Waco, Nov. 11-12, 1991.

The 193-member executive board also approved a motion asking that the upcoming 1990 BGCT meeting in Houston, Nov. 13-14, be asked to "recognize the executive board's authority to amend the 1991 budget" based on recommendations of the special committee.

Currently, following action taken by the Texas Baptist Christian education coordinating board and affirmed by the 15-member BGCT administrative committee on Oct. 2, funds normally allocated by the BGCT for Baylor University are being held in interest-bearing accounts until a determination can be made about their appropriate distribution.

The board narrowly defeated a motion by Curt Dodd of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Houston, stating that the Baylor trustees' action "violated the letter and the spirit of the constitution" of the BGCT and calling on the Baylor board to rescind its action of Sept. 21. The executive board approved a motion by H. Tracy Crawford of Tyler which said no action of the BGCT be seen as passing judgment on Baylor's board of trustees.

In his opening remarks to the BGCT executive board, Executive Director William M. Pinson Jr. noted that the board of trustees at Furman University, Greenville, S.C., on Oct. 15 took "similar action in a similar way" to the Baylor board of trustees. He counseled the board that Texas Baptist response to Baylor's move "will affect relations between state conventions and institutions throughout the United States."

Herbert H. Reynolds, president of Baylor University, addressed the executive board and responded to questions regarding the Sept. 21 action of the university's board of trustees. He maintained that the trustees acted out of commitment to religious liberty and concern about reports that the conservative forces which rose to power in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979 were turning their attention to the BGCT and Baylor.

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Reynolds said that in 1988 "after watching what had transpired" in the Southern Baptist Convention, he secured legal counsel to investigate the university's legal relationship with the BGCT and to determine the relative authority of the convention and the university's board of trustees. The trustees in September acted on the basis of those findings, he said.

Noting that Baylor receives only about 5 percent of its current funds operating budget from the BGCT, he underscored the university's desire to continue as a part of Texas Baptist life regardless of funding decisions by the board or the convention.

"We will continue to be Baptist regardless of how you folks vote," he said. "We are a Texas Baptist institution because of our principles and our commitment, not because of the money."

At several points, Reynolds referred specifically to questions about Baylor's religion department faculty raised by Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, particularly during Gregory's term as president of the BGCT in 1987-89. Reynolds expressed regret that Gregory had not shared those concerns as either an undergraduate or doctoral student at Baylor and that Gregory had rejected earlier offers to join the administrative staff or religion department faculty at Baylor.

Gregory disputed the claim that he had never raised concerns about specific teachings while a student. He also read into the record a prepared statement by the "Baylor Recovery Group" asking the Baylor trustees to reverse their Sept. 21 charter change and calling upon the BGCT to seek "recovery of its historical relationship with Baylor."

The statement was signed by Gregory and by Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas; Don Wills of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas; Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin; Neal Jeffrey of Prestonwood, Dallas; Jack Ridlehoover, pastor of Pioneer Drive Baptist Church, Abilene; Bill Grubbs of First Baptist Church, Dallas; and Fred Roach of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson.

The statement said: "We prayerfully request the trustees of Baylor University to reverse their action of September 21, 1990, and restore Baylor University to its traditional relationship of accountability to the Baptist General Convention of Texas. We call upon them to fulfill their fiduciary responsibility to the Baptist General Convention which elected them;

"Further, we call upon the Baptist General Convention of Texas through its appropriate boards, committees and sessions to pursue the recovery of its historical relationship with Baylor University."

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Retreat leads to atmosphere
of unity for Southwestern

By Scott Collins

N-CD
(SWBTS) Baptist Press
10/19/90

GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP)--Building trust and moving forward out of the 12-year-old controversy which has engulfed the Southern Baptist Convention emerged as the themes from a three-day retreat of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's board of trustees and the school's president, Russell Dilday.

Dilday called the retreat a "bright light of hope," while James T. Draper Jr., trustee chairman, said steps taken during the Oct. 15-17 meeting "enable us to build some trust."

Meeting amid rumors that Dilday would be fired, trustees shared with candor their concerns about the president's recent comments, but the board made no attempt to dismiss Dilday and unanimously approved Bruce Corley, the president's recommendation, as the new dean of the school of theology.

"This is the first bright light of hope I've seen since the New Orleans convention that we are moving forward to solve our problems," Dilday said. "Maybe God is working through this to show ways Southern Baptists can work together again."

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Trustees asked Dilday to explain comments he made during the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans in June, when Dilday described as "satanic" political methods used during the SBC controversy.

Dilday, who issued a written clarification in July, again apologized to trustees for the offensive nature of the word satanic.

"My convictions (about the SBC) are still strong in my heart. For that I make no apology," Dilday said. "But in my attempt to convey those convictions, I used harsh language. I apologize. I'm sorry if I have offended any of you.

"I do not want to be guilty of malice in any way that would be acrimonious," Dilday added. He told board members they "have a great opportunity here and I want to be a part of restoring peace and harmony."

In responding to Dilday's statement to trustees, Draper said he has the same love for the SBC. "But it's difficult to stand knowing you're going to be called a fundamentalist in a negative way when you know that's not what you are," he added. "We don't want everybody to be alike, but to move forward together."

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas and a former SBC president, said the actions of Dilday and trustees during the meeting have demonstrated they are "not destructive" as some people have claimed.

"What we did (during the meeting) was to see a willingness to admit mistakes to reaffirm our commitment to the Lord and to each other," Draper said. He said admitting that mistakes have been made during the past years of conflict can "thrust" Southern Baptists into the future.

Draper emphasized that no one is being asked to compromise convictions. "There are no differences in how we view the Baptist Faith and Message. We must move ahead in conservative scholarship."

Draper said the formula Southwestern trustees and Dilday used could be a key to peace in the SBC. That plan is to first recognize the sincere concerns of each person, he said.

Second, Draper said Southern Baptists must "admit that we haven't always handled things right. We've made mistakes -- all of us Southern Baptists."

Draper's third point is for Baptists to "commit to the common purposes under the values Southern Baptists have always had, including faithfulness to Scripture."

During the retreat at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Hilton, trustees openly voiced concerns about the Southern Baptist controversy, as well as past actions by Dilday and members of the board.

"All of us have got to watch what we say and how we say it," C.A. Johnson, a trustee from Arkansas, said.

Bill Grubbs, from Dallas, said issues which led to the SBC controversy "needed to be addressed. Each one is legitimate. We're solving some of our problems, and we're going to put these things behind us."

Grubbs said the perception that conservatives and good scholarship do not mix is false. "I stand for good scholarship," he said. "I oppose poor scholarship. Let the faculty know we want good scholarship," Grubbs told Dilday. "I think we've got a great seminary. We've not had any problems with a single faculty member."

The trustees' confidence in Southwestern's faculty was appreciated by the professors, William Tolar, vice president for academic affairs and provost, told trustees. He said the faculty was grateful the board did not implement further doctrinal guidelines, such as the SBC Peace Committee Report adopted in 1987. Southwestern's faculty currently signs the Baptist Faith and Message as a doctrinal statement.

Echoing the need to leave the past, Louisiana trustee Wallace Palmer said trust must be rebuilt between the board and Dilday, as well as throughout the SBC. "If we're going to go forward, we've got to have trust," he said.

William Hightower, from South Carolina, said Baptists need to stop taking sides and attending political meetings. He said he began praying each week with a pastor perceived to be on the opposite side of the controversy. "We're good friends today," Hightower said.

"It's time for mainline Southern Baptists to stop fighting among ourselves and get in there and save the Cooperative Program. We need to get fighting mad about the Cooperative Program and stop fighting. We all stand on common ground at the foot of the cross," he added.

Both Dilday and Draper agreed the results of the retreat should not be viewed as "capitulation" by either the board or Dilday, but rather a desire to accept differences, build trust and move forward.

The trustee meeting showed that the "best step forward is to find ways to work together without looking to the past and rehashing the controversy," Dilday said. "We are discussing ways to restore the trust we have lost. Maybe God will use this meeting to move (the SBC) toward unity."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Southwestern trustees elect Corley,
affirm Cooperative Program

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
10/19/90

GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP)--Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary voted unanimously to elect Bruce Corley as dean of the seminary's school of theology and gave unqualified support for the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget during their semi-annual meeting Oct. 15-17.

The regular business session was combined with a retreat during which board members spent time in prayer and giving personal testimonies.

"I take this (election) as a form of trust," Corley told the trustees following the vote. "I want you to hold me accountable for this trust. I will also hold you accountable."

Corley, who has taught New Testament at Southwestern for 15 years, was recommended by Southwestern President Russell Dilday. Prior to the election, board members spent nearly two hours interviewing Corley. The trustees' Academic Affairs Committee then unanimously endorsed the recommendation.

During the question and answer session, Corley described himself as a "basic born-again conservative." He told board members his willingness to become the theology dean was "not a decision of flesh and blood."

Along with electing Corley to the dean's position, the board also promoted him from associate professor to full professor.

Corley, 47, succeeds William Tolar, who was elected vice president for academic affairs and provost during the board's spring meeting, following the retirement of John Newport from that position.

The seminary's trustees joined a growing list of Southern Baptist Convention boards passing resolutions in support of the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptist's unified funding mechanism.

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The resolution came as a response to alternative funding plans which have been discussed in the SBC, including an August meeting in Atlanta which explored bypassing the Cooperative Program.

The board's resolution "strongly affirms the Cooperative program as the best method God has given our denomination to support missionary, benevolent, and educational causes. We strongly encourage all churches of our convention to fully and generously support the Cooperative Program."

The resolution states that "withholding and/or designating Cooperative Program funds will hamper or even jeopardize the ministry of dedicated persons, programs and activities of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Dilday added his full support of the Cooperative Program, telling board members, "I have been, am now, and will be in the future, committed to the Cooperative Program. I will continue to promote it."

Trustees also approved a resolution in support of the seminary's faculty. The resolution, offered by Bill Grubbs, a trustee from Dallas, states that trustees "strongly affirm the faculty and we strongly encourage scholarly pursuits including the use of all tools necessary for conservative scholarly study and teaching."

It states that because the mission of Southwestern is to "provide education and training for Christian ministry in reaching the lost with the gospel and developing disciples," trustees recognize that "scholarship is a necessary ingredient of good education."

In his report, Dilday told trustees there has been a "new stirring of the Holy Spirit" at the school as a result of the recent fall revival and other events connected with the beginning of the new academic year. "This has been a time of renewal of our commitment and faith," he said.

Trustees elected three new faculty members to the school of religious education. Joining the faculty are James Floyd as assistant professor of psychology and counseling; Norma Hedin, instructor in foundations of education; and Robert Welch, assistant professor of administration.

In other business, trustees:

-- Gave approval for the Warren Hultgren Chair of Pastoral Counseling. The chair will be used to fund a professor in the area of pastoral counseling, as well as provide assistance for pastors currently serving churches. The chair is being named for the long-time pastor of First Baptist Church of Tulsa, Okla.

-- Approved giving the B.H. Carroll Award, the seminary's highest honor, to John and Bettye McNaughton of Fort Worth; Lela (Walt) Simpson, Fort Worth; and Kathryn Sullivan Bowld, Memphis, Tenn.

-- Approved the financial audit for the 1989-90 year;

-- Approved the presentation of the seminary's self-study report to the accrediting agencies;

-- Approved a response to a motion from the 1990 SBC stating that "neither the facilities, assets nor personnel" of Southwestern "have been used by the seminary to engage in any political activity within the SBC during the 1989-90 year."

-- Set the 1992 meeting dates for March 9-10 and Oct. 19-20.

Southwestern's trustees will hold their 1990 spring meeting in Fort Worth March 11-12.

Historian tells Southwestern trustees
about vision of Seminary's founders

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GRAPEVINE, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was part of a "divine enterprise" when it was founded more than 82 years ago, Robert Baker, retired professor of church history, told trustees during their semi-annual meeting Oct. 15.

Baker, who spoke during the trustee's retreat, spoke about the seminary's heritage and memories of past teachers who helped to make the school what it is today.

A world-renowned historian, Baker said Southwestern's founders believed the seminary was a God-initiated institution along with being Christ-centered and one which emphasized soul-winning.

B.H. Carroll's "heart, mind and will ... all of him was captured," said Baker. In all of his ministry, Carroll never doubted the power of the gospel, he added.

"B.H. Carroll had a profound understanding of what it was to be lost," Baker said of the school's founder and first president. That understanding gave Carroll the drive to build Southwestern around evangelism and missions, Baker added.

From his passion for winning the lost and evangelistic fervor, Carroll sought out Lee Rutland Scarborough, the outstanding evangelistic preacher, "to establish a chair of fire and a passion for missions," Baker explained.

Baker, who wrote the history of the seminary, said there was also a commitment to institutional excellence, citing such scholars as Scarborough, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale, W.T. Conner, A.H. Newman, J.M. Price, T.B. Maston and Baker James Cauthen.

There has also been a commitment of a redemptive fellowship, said Baker. With an average of 40 years experience, the faculty has been comprised of loyal men and women who could have been pastors or taught in other universities.

Baker said these scholars stayed "because they found on Seminary Hill a unique spirit of fellowship and love."

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EDITORS NOTE:

A longer interview story on Southwestern trustee meeting is available from Tammi Ledbetter, editor, Indiana Baptist, Indiana.

Christians, Muslims back
India's caste job plan

By Michael Chute

N - FMB

Baptist Press
10/19/90

CALCUTTA, India (BP)--Christian and Muslim groups in India are urging the government to implement a plan to reserve jobs for "backward" classes as communal violence sweeps the country.

A proposal submitted by the government's Mandal Commission calls for reserving 27 percent of government jobs for India's lowest castes. Castes are separate social classes in Indian-Hindu tradition. The plan reserves another 7.5 percent of government jobs for tribal people.

Opponents say the plan takes jobs away from "forward" castes at a time when India's unemployment rate runs nearly 40 percent overall but 61 percent among university graduates. The government employs about 10 percent of India's work force, making it the country's largest employer.

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In an emotional televised speech, Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh reiterated his resolve to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations.

"I wish to make it clear," he said, "that should a situation arise in which I have to choose between a cause that I believe in so intensely, and my chair, I will not hesitate for an instant to choose the former."

However, the Indian Supreme Court ordered a stay on implementing the report after anti-Mandal demonstrations throughout India turned violent and many cities were put under curfew.

Many religious groups favor the proposal. In Karnataka state, a group called the Scheduled Castes Christian Sangha urged the Indian government to immediately implement the Mandal Commission report. Along with the Backward and Minorities Federation, the group's members fasted in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Bangalore to demonstrate support for the Mandal recommendations.

Muslims in Kerala state also urged implementation of the government's "reservation" proposal. The Committee on the Indian Union Muslim League said the plan was needed "to uplift the backward communities," according to a United News of India report.

The Mandal Commission recommends reserving 2 percent of all government jobs for Christians.

"Two percent of Indians are Christians, so a 2 percent job reservation is very justified," said Ajoy Saha, a Christian special adviser to West Bengal's labor minister. He has traveled to more than 50 Bengali cities encouraging Christians to support the commission's report.

Saha added that Christians actually stand to gain about 3 percent of Indian government jobs, since many Christians come from tribal groups already included in the Scheduled Castes ("backward communities") list.

In a related development, Christians throughout India have petitioned the government to amend the constitution to include Christians in the Scheduled Castes list. Christians also want to see state constitutions amended to guarantee them rights afforded to the Scheduled Castes.

"We demand that our political rights and equality of opportunity and our share of the national wealth be ensured by equating and including us in the Scheduled Castes list," said Christian leader A.D. Balthazar Reyan in Bangalore.

Christians contend that privileges given to the Scheduled Castes -- to which many of them belonged as Hindus before they became Christians -- should be available to them even if they change faiths. Hindus who convert to other religions such as Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism retain these benefits.

"When someone from the Scheduled Caste embraces Christianity, the benefit previously available to that person is not available to the Christian," explained P.P. Williams, a Christian and secretary of state for Andhra Pradesh. "Once you accept Christianity you are on par with the rest of the forward communities."

The government offers no job reservation for members of the forward castes. These people must compete for government jobs in the open market.

In September more than 200,000 Christians signed a petition requesting the government to list them with the Scheduled Caste, granting benefits available to their counterparts in Hinduism. Christians claim that no difference exists socially and economically between themselves and Hindus; only their religion is different.

The Christians said the government reacted favorably to their demands, until furor over the Mandal Commission put moves for a constitutional amendment on hold.

But not all Christians want the special privileges, said Lloyd Raine, pastor of Carey Baptist Church in Calcutta. "In 1947, when independence came, the government asked Christians what they wanted and they said they didn't want anything, just freedom to be Christians," he said.

Christian leaders at that time reportedly felt inclusion among the Scheduled Castes would promote the caste system, which they believed was wrong.

"The theory was that Christians would look after their own people so the government doesn't need to give them rights," Raine added. "But it hasn't always worked out that way because many of the Christians are very poor."

The Mandal Commission's report has refocused public attention on India's traditional caste system. Adherence to the rigid structure had begun to relax in recent years, but now Indians are divided into two camps -- usually by caste background -- over the issue of reserving government jobs.

"In the schools there's a polarization that was not there before," said Williams. "Everybody is identified by the caste."

In recent weeks more than 100 high school and college students have committed suicide to protest the job reservation plan. Most set themselves on fire. Others have died after taking poison or hanging themselves.

More than 80 people have died in communal fighting throughout India as "anti-reservationists" have called for strikes in India's major cities. In Delhi, a 14-year-old girl was set afire and burned to death by two older youths in her school.

In addition, 60 people were killed and another 50 injured in the Oct. 9 firebombing of a passenger train outside Hyderabad. Witnesses said youths claiming to be Naxalites, a group associated with the People's War Group, taunted passengers and challenged them to support the Mandal Commission before dousing the crowded railroad car with gasoline and jumping from the flaming compartment.