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91-74

BGCT committee offers proposal
on new relationship with Baylor By Terry Barone & Ken Camp

N-CD

DALLAS (BP)--A special study committee named by Texas Baptists in the wake of Baylor University's surprise charter change last September drafted on May 13 a proposal outlining a new relationship between the state Baptist convention and the university.

Under the proposal, the Baptist General Convention of Texas would ask Baylor to agree the convention directly elect 25 percent of regents elected annually and the university regents elect 25 percent. Of the remaining 50 percent, Baylor would nominate two Texas Baptists for each vacancy and the BGCT would choose one.

The proposal includes governance by a single-tiered board of regents for Baylor, eliminating the 48-member board of trustees previously elected by the BGCT.

The agreement also calls for at least a 90 percent vote of the regents to amend three key provisions of the university charter: the university operates according to Christian and Baptist ideals; university assets would be transferred to the BGCT upon dissolution; and each regent be a Baptist.

If ratified, the agreement "concludes whatever controversy may have existed between the convention and Baylor regarding Baylor's Sept. 21, 1990, action amending the university's charter."

The proposal will be presented to the BGCT executive board at its June 11 meeting in Dallas. If Baylor does not accept the recommended agreement by July 20 after its board meeting, the committee will make a new recommendation to the executive board at its September meeting.

If Baylor agrees to the proposal, the committee recommends the convention's coordinating boards for education and human welfare institutions consider releasing escrowed 1990 funds totalling \$1.5 million, including interest earned.

The agreement also calls for all expenses directly related to the Baylor action to be deducted from the funds. Total BGCT committee expenses are about \$80,000.

Robert Naylor of Fort Worth, chairman of the special committee, said he hoped Baylor "would find in this proposal the protection it desired and the participation which the BGCT felt was basically necessary for a relationship."

Naylor termed the proposal "a positive effort toward reconciliation and a new relationship."

Phil Lineberger, president of the BGCT and pastor of Richardson Heights Baptist Church, Richardson, said, "I have a great deal of confidence that the proposal that has been made will be received in a good spirit and will be carefully evaluated and, hopefully, accepted by (Baylor President) Dr. (Herbert) Reynolds and the leadership of Baylor University.

"Our great desire is to continue to demonstrate a spirit of togetherness in our common goals of winning Texas to Christ and providing young people with a quality Christian education."

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Last Sept. 21 Baylor trustees revised the school's charter to establish a board of regents as the university's governing body and elected 16 people to the new board, citing fears Baylor's academic freedom would be endangered if the "fundamentalist takeover" of the national Southern Baptist Convention extended to state conventions such as the BGCT.

The trustee action was made without BGCT notification and in violation of the convention's constitution. Consequently, funds normally allocated by the BGCT for Baylor University were placed in interest-bearing escrow accounts.

In a called meeting Oct. 17, the BGCT executive board named a special committee chaired by Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, to examine the legal, financial and relational issues arising from the Sept. 21 action.

The committee later approved a six-member subcommittee to meet with a similar group from the Baylor Board of Regents. After four meetings of the two subcommittees, the full committee on BGCT/Baylor relationship on March 18 approved a plan that it presented to the Baylor Board of Regents on May 2.

The plan asked Baylor to guarantee its commitments to remaining a Christian, Baptist institution. It also called for a return to a single-tiered governing board -- 25 percent elected by the BGCT according to traditional procedures, 25 percent elected directly by the trustees/regents themselves, and 50 percent nominated by Baylor and elected by messengers to the annual state convention. Of the 50 percent, Baylor would have nominated three for each vacancy and the BGCT would have named one.

On May 2, the Baylor regents rejected the committee's plan, proposing instead a single-tiered governing board of regents, 25 percent of whom would be directly elected by the BGCT and 75 percent elected by the regents themselves.

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Gimmicks are not church
growth, Robinson claims

By Mark Wingfield

F-NMB

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Getting people into a church building through gimmicks is not biblical church growth, Darrell Robinson said.

Instead, he offered five techniques the early church used as biblical means to church growth.

Robinson, vice president for evangelism with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, spoke at the HMB's first School of Evangelism and Church Growth at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

"You cannot grow a church simply on gimmicks," the veteran pastor said. "You have to build a foundation."

Robinson admitted he used a few attention-getting gimmicks as a pastor and might use some again to get people in church. However, he said persistent use of gimmicks will not result in true church growth.

"I am concerned about church growth at any cost," he declared. "Anybody can attract a crowd with gimmicks, but that is not church growth.

"When we become goal-driven we are likely to do unethical and unbiblical things."

Instead, a pastor with a passion for evangelism and ministry who clearly states these priorities to laity will foster church growth, he suggested.

Robinson listed five techniques he sees in the book of Acts that the early church used to reach unbelievers:

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1. Public proclamation. While the early church proclaimed the gospel publicly, the modern church proclaims it in a building where only believers come, Robinson said. "We've either got to proclaim the message outside the building or get the people who need to hear it inside the building."

2. Caring affirmation. Citing the biblical ministry of Dorcas, he said, "One of the most powerful techniques for reaching people is ministry-evangelism."

3. Mighty works. Robinson cited the biblical account of Peter and John healing a blind man at the temple gate, gathering a crowd and seeing 5,000 Christian commitments. He urged pastors to look for "God's mighty works" and use them as a witness.

4. Geographic saturation. Robinson suggested churches should provide a "caring touch" for every resident of their communities every six months. "Not many people are saved through saturation," he said, "but it creates a climate for evangelism."

5. Personal confrontation with the claims of Christ. No matter what church growth techniques are used, the unchurched must be personally confronted with the gospel in a way they can understand it, he said.

More than 300 people attended the Glorieta school. Specialized training was offered on a variety of topics ranging from the family to street evangelism. A similar conference will be offered at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center Sept. 3-6.

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Commentary ideal for preachers
three pastor-writers say

By Chip Alford

F. AMB

Baptist Press
5/15/91

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Ever since theological heavyweights like Martin Luther and John Calvin penned their well-read volumes of scriptural interpretation, great preaching and biblical commentary have gone hand in hand.

Today, three Southern Baptist pastors are preparing to add their "reverent scholarship" to that tradition by writing volumes for a new 40-volume biblical commentary series being published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman Press.

"I think some of the greatest commentary has come out of great preaching, and vice versa," said Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, and one of three pastors writing volumes for "The New American Commentary." Gregory is writing the volume on 1, 2 and 3 John.

Ken Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., and Frank Page, recently called as pastor of Warren Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga., are also contributing authors for the 40-volume series. Page is the former pastor of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

"The New American Commentary," which will be released over a six-year period beginning in June, is designed "to present a scholarly, conservative view of Scripture which affirms the divine inspiration, complete authority and inerrancy of the Bible," according to general editor David Dockery. The New International Version of the Bible will be the standard translation for the commentary, he said.

"This (commentary series) is being written with pastors in mind," said Page, author of the volume on Jonah. "It will be respectable on a scholarly level, but it will also be usable and understandable."

Hemphill, who is writing the volume on 1 Corinthians, cited the commentary's "practical edge."

"Our goal is to bring out the application and also deal with the devotional aspect of each book," he said. "I really think it is an excellent format for pastors."

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The new commentary has found a balance between the highly technical and the conveniently practical, Gregory said. "It will read like theological narrative," he explained, adding it is important to note the NAC represents "reverent scholarship."

While the three pastors said they believe the commentary will be helpful to all evangelical pastors, they cited several reasons the series may become invaluable to Southern Baptist preachers.

"I think first of all it will be an unashamedly conservative evangelical commentary," Page said. "Also, this is a distinctively Baptist-produced work. (All 46 authors and editors involved in the project are Baptists, and all but six are Southern Baptists). So, many of our pastors, I think, will have some built-in confidence that this will be doctrinally in line with Baptist evangelical theology. I will be able to say to pastors, 'This is a commentary you can trust.'"

The "distinctly Baptist" framework of the commentary, Gregory said, "will be a very significant advantage, especially when you are dealing with critical passages on important doctrinal issues such as believer's baptism and the nature of the church."

The size of the NAC (more than triple the size of the last Southern Baptist commentary series) is another important plus, the pastors said.

"The size alone will give us the ability to give ample coverage to each Bible book," Page said. "There is already excitement out there that this is going to be a massive, major commentary that will be around through the 21st century."

Page also expressed confidence NAC will gain acceptance from all segments of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"There is suspicion that this is a fundamentalist-produced work and that the writers are being closely monitored to make sure they are not going to say anything improper," he said. "But that has not been the case. The editors are extremely interested in producing a mainline evangelical commentary."

This is all three pastors' first try at technical commentary writing, though Gregory wrote a January Bible Study textbook on the New Testament book of James and Hemphill did his doctoral dissertation on the Pauline letters.

"I have always had a desire to contribute to this kind of literature," Gregory said. "Commentaries have always been my daily companions -- like a bunch of friends gathered around me."

"It was a tremendous experience for me, a growing experience," Page said of the two years he spent writing his manuscript on Jonah. The first of the three pastor-written books to be released, Page's volume will arrive in book stores sometime in 1993. Hemphill's volume will be released in 1994 and Gregory's book the following year.

"I have always felt that Jonah was a preacher's book," Page said. "It deals with serious subjects such as God's grace, forgiveness, repentance and commitment. It is a book that preaches well."

In addition to the pastor-writers, others contributing to "The New American Commentary" include 27 seminary professors and administrators, nine college professors and administrators, three SBC denominational workers, a Baptist missionary, a Southern Baptist seminary student, a Southern Baptist layman, and a retired college professor. The pastors are hopeful the commentary's publication will encourage other Southern Baptist scholars to become involved in similar writing projects.

"I think there are a lot of fine scholars among Southern Baptists that need to be heard in the larger evangelical market," Hemphill said. "There is a great deal we can learn across evangelical lines."

Mission gift crosses
racial barriers

By Craig Bird

N. FMB

DURBAN, South Africa (BP)--It's a long way from Phoenix, South Africa, to Dagoretti, Kenya -- no matter how you measure it.

Phoenix is an Indian conclave outside the South African city of Durban. The concrete houses, although small, sit in neatly kept yards. All the streets are paved and lighted.

Dagoretti is a suburb of Nairobi, Kenya's capital. Most of its people live jammed in tiny huts built with scrap lumber and tin. If the dust chokes you, you know it's the dry season. During the rains, mud is ankle-deep.

Indians in Phoenix gaze fearfully across a hillside to a black township and brace for violence from their neighbors. In Dagoretti, black Kenyans and Ugandans envy the luxury cars and thriving businesses of local Indians.

Very likely the only direct link between the two communities runs through two congregations -- Brookside Baptist Church in Phoenix and Dagoretti Baptist Church in Nairobi.

Brookside church constituted in February 1990. During its first worship service the tiny congregation took up a mission offering separate from the regular offering. The 14 adults present gave more than \$45, then asked a visiting missionary from Kenya to take the money back with him and "give it to one of our black sister churches."

"People outside South Africa may not understand the significance of how these people chose to use their mission offering," pointed out Southern Baptist missionary Dwight Reagan, a church planter in Durban. "Indians as a group fear blacks as a group because of the history of violence here. Many in Durban have permits to carry guns. They fear the high level of crime and violence yet understand the gospel command to reach across racial barriers."

Francis Benjamin, lay pastor of Brookside, referred to the situation in comments that first Sunday.

"God has shown us all there is to do here," he said. "There will be many people living in this new community. Maybe one day our black brothers from the other side (the adjoining settlement) will join us. It will be a great surprise, but it can happen."

Because of anti-apartheid sanctions against South Africa, it took several months for the gift to be converted from South African rands to U.S. dollars to Kenyan shillings. But in March 1991 it finally was delivered to Dagoretti.

Despite the delay, the timing was near-perfect. The previous week, Dagoretti had started construction on a temporary building; the long rains were due within two weeks and the tent the church had been meeting under for more than a year was rotten and shredding in the wind. In fact, the day after the mission gift was added to the building fund, the tent collapsed in complete disrepair.

Even the amount of the offering, although not imposing, matched a specific need Brookside Baptists could not have imagined.

"We'd spent all our building fund but decided, on faith, to buy plastic sheets to put on the roof to let in light," Dagoretti pastor William Eyika explained. The unexpected gift covered the extra cost with \$3.50 left over.

Eyika believes the new building will spur more growth at Dagoretti, which averages about 250 people in attendance. And because a handful of Indian Christians in South Africa backed their belief in a non-racial gospel, sunlight will be shining through the roof.

In Hong Kong Baptist school,
student got 'Christian education' By Breena Kent Paine

F-10 (NOTES)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"You can study about God, but you don't need God; you are your own god," Jessica Wong's Buddhist parents told her as they enrolled her in a Christian school in Hong Kong for academic purposes.

"Even though I was forced to memorize Bible verses and attend Sunday school, I never took it seriously. To make a good grade was my concern," Wong said.

When she was 17 years old, however, "something happened to my family that changed my whole philosophy of life," Wong said. "I realized that even if you are strong, you cannot help yourself."

The tension and conflict in her family drove her to study different religions, looking for meaning in life.

When a Christian friend invited her to church, she went, out of politeness. But "God moved my heart." A year later she was baptized.

"I was the first one in my family to become a Christian. They got mad," Wong said. "One day, I was reading the Bible. My brother saw and threw away the Bible.

"The only prayer I could pray was in the restroom because no one could see me there," she continued. "It was the only place I could communicate with God, concentrate.

"God changed me. He changed my attitude toward my parents. I became more concerned about them. As I shared kindness with my father and mother, they changed. They accepted me more and more and accepted my God more and more. They even came to church with me once in awhile."

Wong's two younger sisters also saw the change in her life and came to know Christ for themselves.

"I can see God really changed me, and from me, he demonstrated himself to my family," Wong said. "I still pray for them and anticipate that one day I can return home and we can all pray together as God's family. ... I have faith He will bring my whole family to God."

Wong obtained a degree in office administration from Hong Kong Baptist College, and became the executive secretary in one of the largest computer companies in the world. In one year, she was promoted three times and her salary was tripled.

At the same time, she also was a volunteer youth counselor in her church. "The more time I spent with the youth, the more I wanted to do for them," Wong said, "and the more I felt I needed to get more training."

At work, she began to feel a tension with her newly found faith. In the Chinese culture of Hong Kong, "in order to earn a reputation at work, you have to be tough, seldom smile, to get things done," Wong said. "I realized that was not what God wanted for me. ... The higher the position I filled, the more isolated I felt."

When Wong's younger sister came to the United States to study at Southeast Missouri State University, Wong came with her to help her move. She "fell in love" with the campus; and the registrar, a Christian, encouraged her to go back to school. "I said, 'No way, not after so many years.'"

"When I went back to Hong Kong, I knew I would get another promotion, so I asked for the Lord's guidance," Wong said. When she decided to study for a counseling degree at her sister's university, her mother cried, "You're giving up all this that you've worked hard for?"

"But I had to do what God wanted me to do," Wong said. Once at Southeast, Wong began to pray, "God, you led me to this country; now what do you want me to do?"

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She discovered that the university's Baptist Student Union was trying to reach out to some 300 international students, but needed help. She and a friend began an international Bible study group in her apartment. At the first meeting, 20 internationals attended.

"God blessed and the numbers increased. My apartment couldn't hold the numbers anymore," Wong said, so they moved the Bible study to the BSU basement.

"Within one year, 15 were saved and 10 baptized," Wong said, "but I still didn't feel God was calling me to some kind of ministry. I felt so inadequate."

As students began coming to her with problems, she realized she needed more training in counseling and in the Bible. In August of 1989, she enrolled at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and hopes to receive her master of arts in Christian education degree this month.

She is a youth counselor at New Orleans Chinese Baptist Church, and leads Bible studies and youth services as well. She has found many of the difficulties Chinese youth face in the United States stem from coping with two cultures at once.

"I asked one girl, 'Are you Chinese or American?' She seemed to struggle for awhile; then said, 'I am an American-born Chinese,'" Wong explained. "She can't speak Chinese; she can't read her own language."

"My seminary training, especially in counseling, helped me a lot in helping people," she said. "Theologically, it built on my foundation more firmly, which was important because I didn't come from a Southern Baptist background."

"This is a great place. If you open up yourself, then you learn not only biblical knowledge, but friendship and fellowship," Wong continued. "Sometimes people say the journey of a minister is lonely, but you can find support here."

Now, as Wong nears graduation, she feels, "the Lord that carried me through those years will prepare the place for me to serve him."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary