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August 5, 1991

91-116

Controversy: How are Southern Baptists
and their agencies responding? By Maria Sykes Clere

F-10

NASHVILLE (BP)--One of the legacies of the decade of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is an air of distrust evident in some state conventions. Nowhere is that more apparent than the battle by a number of state convention institutions to sever their legal ties with their states.

Here are four examples.

A recent proposed agreement between the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Baylor University, if approved, could be the settlement to a near year-long battle regarding ownership of the Waco, school. Distrust of "fundamentalists" was one of the charges made by Baylor, the largest college affiliated with Southern Baptists, which sought to separate from state convention ownership.

Sept. 21, 1990, Baylor's board of trustees voted to amend the school's charter. The amendment established a board of regents with sole responsibility for governance of the school. Baylor would control the selection of the majority of those regents.

"... Friends, students and alumni of Baylor can be assured that Baylor will remain true to its historic mission of being the world's finest Christian university and, at the same time, be free from an attempted takeover by any special interest group," said Baylor President Herbert H. Reynolds at the announcement of the action. The motion to change the charter won by a vote of 30 to 7 with one abstention.

The Texas convention responded by escrowing funds normally destined for the university.

Oct. 15, 1990, Furman University's board of trustees voted to amend the Greenville, S.C., university's charter and give the board sole power to elect Furman's trustees.

"This action will enable the state Baptist convention and Furman to pursue their mutual interests with minimum controversy," said Minor Mickel, chairman of Furman's board. The action to amend the charter required a simple majority vote by trustees in attendance.

July 30, 1991, the board of trustees voted 22-2 to adopt a recommendation proposed by the executive committee that allows the state convention to participate in the selection of the university's trustees.

Furman will recommend 10 names to the convention for the five new trustee positions open each year. The convention then will choose five of the nominees to serve five-year terms on the board. Furman officially will name them.

Dec. 19, 1990, Nashville's Baptist Hospital's trustees approved amendments in the hospital's charter, authorizing the hospital to elect its own trustees. The action was part of the board's plan to "prepare the hospital for the challenges of the 1990s," explained board chairman Guy Bates in a Jan. 7 Baptist Press release.

After extended discussions, the Tennessee Baptist Convention executive board agreed to accept a ten point proposal from Baptist Hospital May 7. The executive board also approved the reduction of allocated Cooperative Program unified budget funds by 2.9 percent.

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The Georgia Baptist Convention initiated the Mercer study committee in 1987 to study the financial crisis of the Macon university. In a preliminary report in 1989 the study group asked the trustee selection process be changed so one-third would be nominated by the trustees, one third by the alumni and one third by the CBC.

Currently, the state convention selects each trustee from a list of three submitted. Nine nominees for the three seats are chosen by alumni. The remaining trustees are chosen by a trustee committee based on recommendations from the university president.

Mercer trustees refused to change the process.

Changes in structures and charters are indications of a growing desire by institutional administrators to have more control over their institutions.

But, in addition, there appeared to be sharp theological and methodical differences between the two groups sparking heated debates, criticism and paranoia. In attempts to come to an agreement or to simply "get along," communications have turned hostile in some cases.

"It would absolutely kill me to see Baylor fall into their (the Fundamentalists) hands to become their toy, an institution they could play with as a part of their total power play," Reynolds said in a Baptist Press release in May 1988. "My mind is one of doing everything within our power to make sure Baylor stays Baptist and that it is an institution that belongs to the people and not a few power-hungry individuals."

Robert Naylor, chairman of the committee on BGCT-Baylor Relationship, "harshly criticized the action of the Baylor trustees who 'unilaterally severed' the 'covenant' of trust between the BGCT and Baylor. The action was 'surprisingly private if not secretive,' he charged, 'and was a violation of the trust that existed among Texas Baptists,'" a Nov. 15 Baptist Press release said.

Despite the rhetoric, it appears over time Baptists finally find suitable compromises. Not everybody is happy, maybe most are not.

But, as Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis explained in an address to associational directors of missions during the National Convocation on the Baptist Association at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center in September 1989, "Cooperation despite diversity is essential to the survival of the Southern Baptist Convention."

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SBC architecture guide
is city's reference book

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
8/5/91

F-55B

CALIFORNIA CITY, Calif. (BP)--An architectural guidebook produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville has become a reference for church building specifications by city codes administrators in California City, Calif.

Frank Lane, civil engineering technician, has used the guide when matters related to church specifications are not addressed in the town's uniform building code. And he recommends that churches use the book as a means to "getting the church building you want."

In fact, Lane introduced two Southern Baptists to the book recently when they came to him for answers to a number of church building questions. Bob Doyon, vice president of Shaffer Builders, and Ron Bell, owner of Ron Bell Construction, both members of First Baptist Church of California City, now call the "Church-Building/Property Guidebook" their "builder's bible."

First Baptist Church "wanted to plan wisely. If we were to reach God's potential for us, we had to maximize all our available space," said Pastor Curtis O'Brien.

O'Brien said he asked the building committee, of which Bell is chairman and Doyon is a member, to research parking and building limitations for the size of the church property.

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"This led the building committee to the city codes department where they discovered the Convention Press book contains the necessary specifications," O'Brien recounted. "The result of the research showed our three acres of land can normally accommodate 450 to 500 people in education and worship space."

Doyon said he believes the book "takes away all the guesswork. If you know how to draw blueprints and if you know construction, that book tells you what to do. It's very easy to read, whereas codes books are difficult to understand."

Lane said he recommends and refers to the guidebook for questions of seating and use of space, "which our codes don't cover." He was on the previous building committee for First Baptist Church's current facility and used the guidebook then. Now a member of another church, he recommended the church use the book again "because it exceeds our local codes, which address minimum requirements."

Lane said he has found nothing in the book that contradicts building codes or the local fire marshal's codes. And while he admits using the local minimum requirements will permit a congregation to occupy a new building, he cautions that "minimum doesn't always mean it's a real good thing."

When the building committee looked at a proposed sanctuary, a future education building and parking space, they found the needed elements would fit, based on the guidebook's recommended specifications, O'Brien said.

"Where do you go to find out how big the choir loft should be and what percentage of the sanctuary it should occupy?" asked Doyon. "How big should the vestibule be for the size sanctuary? How high should the ceiling be? How big should the sanctuary be for 500 people?"

Bell said he believes the book provides "a lot of information out of experience. Everything we have looked up in the book has provided everything we need to know, and we have tried to get everything done we possibly can before we spend any money."

When First Baptist Church constructs its new facility and remodels its old one, the building committee will know how far the pulpit should be from the first pew and how far apart the pews should be. And they will know the rationale behind each detail.

The "Church Property/Building Guidebook," produced by the Sunday School Board's church architecture department, is being revised and will be released in January 1992.

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

CORRECTION:

In the (BP) story "Ministry to Mormons objects to Salt Lake City meeting," released 8/2/91, the first graph should read as follows:

MARLOW, Okla. (BP)--Utah Missions, Inc., a ministry directed at Mormonism and recently incorporated into the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, has called for the Southern Baptist Convention to rescind a decision approved in Atlanta in June to go to Salt Lake City for the 1998 annual meeting.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

HMB presents awards to
outstanding missionaries

By Jim Newton

N-HMB

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board presented awards to three outstanding missionaries during recognitions at Jericho: Missions Festival.

Al "Blow" Wyatt and his wife, Molly, of Tyler, Texas, were recognized as Mission Service Corps Volunteers of the Year.

Laura Lee Barksdale, a US-2 missionary assigned to evangelism and resort ministries in Orlando, Fla., received the 1991 Ken Prickett Award for creativity in missions.

Barksdale has been involved in home missions since 1984 when she was a member of the performing arts team at the World's Fair in New Orleans. She also performed during Baptist ministries at Expo 86 in Vancouver, Canada, and helped develop creative arts teams in Hawaii in 1987.

Since 1988, she has traveled across the nation to perform outdoors in such places as the Boston Commons in Massachusetts, Hilton Head Island, S.C., South Carolina beaches, and Disney World at Orlando, Fla.

The award she received is named for the late Ken Prickett, who directed creative missions for the Home Mission Board prior to his death in 1983.

The Wyatts, MSC volunteers since 1983, were recognized for their role in recruiting more than 70 other volunteers and indirectly influencing 40 others to serve as volunteer missionaries.

Wyatt, a retired oil refinery worker who became known as "Blow" because he talked so much, said serving as a MSC volunteer had been "the greatest joy of my life."

The Wyatts served as MSC volunteers in Dakar, Senegal, in 1986 during a partnership mission project between Texas Baptists and Baptists in that West African nation. They also have been involved in Texas Baptist River Ministry projects and partnership missions work in Minnesota-Wisconsin.

Bob Mills, HMB director of Mission Service Corps, said the Wyatts have made more than 200 formal presentations on MSC to 15,000 people, distributed 35,000 pamphlets and information sheets on volunteer missions, and supervised other consultants in recruiting MSC volunteers.

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California youth expect
glamour in the gospel

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

Baptist Press
8/5/91

COLD SPRINGS, Calif. (BP)--Presenting the gospel to California teens might easily fizzle into weak applause if the production does not dazzle and entertain, several youth camp leaders said.

Ministry techniques that work with youth in the South, the Midwest or the East are powerless on young people from California, Centrifuge staffers agreed.

Twelve Centrifuge staffers who traveled to five western states leading youth camps for 10 weeks agreed California young people were the hardest to reach.

Centrifuge, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department, is a Christian recreation camp for youth, grades 8-12.

"The youth here (in California) seem to be faced with a lot more problems and pressures than other kids," said Vicki Lambert, a staffer from Fort Worth, Texas. "They see so much glamour and money. They are used to big productions that dazzle you."

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Kevin Sigsby, the West coast traveling team director, agreed California youth seek entertainment within their Bible lessons, and they don't buy into the gospel as easily as young people from other areas.

"You just have to realize that some of the illustrations you use on kids from Wyoming or Montana aren't going to work on kids from California.

"They are tougher to get to because you have to impress them. These are kids who grew up on Disneyland, Hollywood and Yosemite."

Young people from California seem more complacent and apathetic to Christianity, several staffers said. If they do not perceive an activity to "be cool," then they will not participate.

"California kids seem more concerned about themselves and what society thinks about them," said Pam Foster, a staffer from Gold Hill, Ore. "They're into all the cliché teen-age things."

Because they are concerned with "being so cool," Foster said, "they have trouble letting people in. They are wrapped up in their own little package.

"It's tough to break through their shells, but it has happened during the (four) weeks we've been here," she said.

John Craig, a staffer from Nashville, said he believes the West is a vast mission field "especially here in California where the youth are so different."

Craig said he struggles with "not being able to come in and change their lives. But then I realize it can't be done in one week.

"The whole idea is that we act as a catalyst ... as some spark so they can see God is real," he said.

Daniel Lambert, husband of Vicki Lambert and the Centrifuge team preacher, said California teens have built up a "coolness barrier."

"They build a wall up around themselves and within that wall they act like the world tells them to act to be accepted," he said. "It's very hard to get them out of that coolness barrier and it is definitely a deterrent spiritual growth.

Lambert said he spent three frustrating weeks in California last year as a Centrifuge pastor "just wondering how to break through."

"The only thing I finally figured out is that we have to rely on the Holy Spirit. I have learned that in ministry to these kids we have to rely on him a lot more," he said.

Lambert said he believes the youth who make it to a Christian camp are "here by some divine appointment.

"I would say some of their parents probably didn't want them off at some church camp, while others might have sent them just to get some space at home.

"This may be these kids' only opportunity to hear about spiritual things. We have to do the best we can for them."