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Seminaries to decide
baccalaureate program

By C. Lacy Thompson

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The question of whether New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary can operate a baccalaureate degree program apparently has been left for the presidents of all six convention seminaries to decide.

Southern Baptist Executive Committee members responded to a dispute regarding the degree program last week by asking the seminary presidents to review their program statement and suggest a plan of action.

Rather than vote up or down on the New Orleans program, the idea is to allow the seminary presidents to propose what their program statement means and how it should read, said Guy Sanders of Florida, who chaired the subcommittee that addressed the issue last week.

"The Executive Committee is not in position to tell others what to do," he said. "We can only help them interpret their program statement. So we were not in position to instruct New Orleans to do or not to do anything. At the same time, we cannot let the program statement mean whatever anybody wants it to mean. We have to have a uniform meaning. The key lies in clarifying the documents."

The issue is one of significance.

Last March, New Orleans trustees approved an on-campus baccalaureate degree program for older students. Shortly thereafter Baptist college presidents from across the national convention complained the seminary was invading their territory and violating its own operating guidelines.

Last week, the argument was brought to the Executive Committee, where New Orleans President Landrum Leavell defended the school's action. More than 50 students already have begun in the new degree program at the school.

Leavell offered the same prepared remarks to the program and budget subcommittee that he gave to New Orleans seminary trustees the previous week. Trustees affirmed the remarks prior to the Executive Committee meeting.

During his trustee remarks, Leavell noted the seminary's action had drawn fire for its action. Executive Committee information supports that view, noting that various college presidents including Robert Lynn of Louisiana College and then Executive Committee President Harold Bennett all communicated with Leavell concerning the new program.

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All urged it be reconsidered or stopped.

Leavell said no and explained why in his remarks.

He disagreed that the baccalaureate degree program violates the school's program statement, which provides for the seminaries to offer pre-baccalaureate degrees but does not define what those degrees can be. All six seminaries offer some type of associate degree for persons who have no college education but wish to receive theological training.

However, Leavell did agree the seminary is breaking tradition. "I submit it is true there was a day when it was understood that the colleges provided liberal arts education and the seminaries provided theological education," he said.

"This distinction no longer exists, with the Baptist colleges opening seminaries everywhere and those who aren't are offering master of arts degrees in Christian ministry."

Leavell cited five Baptist colleges that have opened seminaries. "The colleges are seemingly without restraint in regard to this departure from 'tradition,' yet they want us confined to tradition. They have jumped into our market with a frenzy and not a voice of protest has been heard.

"The seminaries have, until this time, suffered in silence and watched as our market rapidly eroded."

Leavell also cited the impact of nonconvention schools that claim Southern Baptist identity and the fact state colleges have "pressured" seminaries to offer advanced standing to qualified religion majors, thus reducing the seminaries' master-level program by one year.

The New Orleans leader emphasized the need for seminaries to respond to such trends in order to survive. "The bottom line is that the seminaries that survive will be the ones that change. New Orleans intends to survive, and we continue to look at all the 'sacred cows' of yesterday. Many are worth preserving. Some are not."

Leavell also stressed the intent of the New Orleans program is not to compete with state colleges but to reach a yet untapped market of students. He noted the New Orleans program is open only to students 25 years or older and is tailor-made for persons who attain associate degrees and wish to continue their education. Those students have found additional training difficult to come by, he said. Some Baptist colleges have refused to accept all the hours from a seminary associate degree.

"(They) have shown disdain for these people, accepting half or less of the hours," Leavell said. "They have basically said, 'We don't want you older people.' This market is presently being overlooked by our Baptist colleges, but the people are eager for training. We see the training and preparation through theological education of people like this to be in harmony with, and not contrary to, our mission statement."

Leavell appealed to the Executive Committee to approve the school's efforts. "We have no control and very little influence on the colleges, which are owned and operated by the state conventions, at least till they get enough endowment to separate from Baptist conventions and stand alone. We can't require them not to open seminaries or to drop all their seminary-type courses," he said.

"The Southern Baptist Convention and the Executive Committee are our only allies, and we look to you for support in an endeavor to offer degrees, in a theological context, for God-called men and women, many of whom otherwise will be deprived of this opportunity."

Following the Executive Committee meeting, Leavell said he was pleased with how the issue was handled and felt many committee members agreed with the school's efforts.

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Sanders agreed there was sympathy for what the seminary was trying to accomplish. But he said members also were aware of how the issue affects Baptist colleges.

Because of the difference of opinion on what the program statement allows seminaries to do, Leavell interprets it one way and college presidents another. Sanders said his committee decided the judicious thing to do was let the presidents decide what their program statement means.

"I don't think this was an up or down vote on the issue. I think there was sympathy with New Orleans' motives. But we were not there to make a decision on whether seminaries have a right to do this. Our responsibility was no further than what does the program statement say. And there was a difference of opinion on that. So we decided we need clarification at that point."

Theoretically, the seminary presidents could suggest a plan that allows or disallows the New Orleans move. Leavell said he expects the move to allow the baccalaureate degrees. Sources have indicated at least one other convention seminary already is moving toward a baccalaureate degree program. And all the seminaries have been hit by the trends Leavell noted.

However, any program statement revision suggested by the presidents must be approved by the Executive Committee and by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention.

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GLC's Mitchell testifies
for Institute of Medicine

By Louis Moore

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WASHINGTON (BP)--In testimony before the Institute of Medicine, C. Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, urged caution on the use of widespread genetic screening in the United States.

Genetic screening is the identification of individuals who are at high risk of having a genetically linked disease or disorder such as Tay-Sachs, Huntington's disease or Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy.

"Genetic screening is a wonderful technology and is to be celebrated when used properly," said Mitchell. "Researchers have identified as many as 4,000 genetically linked diseases."

In his testimony, Mitchell argued that genetic screening ought not be offered or ought to be severely restricted for diseases for which there is no known therapy or cure.

"Genetic screening for diseases for which there is no treatment or cure, it seems to us, cannot but lead to the more widespread practice of abortion. In fact, as genetic research continues to offer more sensitive and reliable tests and as increasing numbers of genetic diseases are detectable, decisions to abort affected babies will also no doubt increase," he said.

In a resolution adopted at the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, Southern Baptists went on record as opposing "the testing, approval, distribution, and marketing in America of new drugs and technologies which will make the practice of abortion more convenient and more widespread."

Mitchell said, "There are many, many issues at stake here. It seems especially cruel and discriminatory to allow genetic screening for sex selection. If a family already has two female children and wants a baby boy, surely they should not be allowed to abort a baby simply because they think she is the wrong sex."

India, Asia, and some American clinics routinely perform sex-selection abortions, according to Joel Davis in his book, Mapping the Code: The Human Genome Project and the Choices of Modern Science (John Wiley & Sons, 1990).

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The Institute of Medicine is a Washington, D.C.-based agency that advises government policy-making bodies. On Sept. 17 the Institute's Committee on Assessing Genetic Risks conducted a public meeting on the availability, accessibility, financing and ethical appropriateness of genetic screening, at which Mitchell's testimony was delivered. The Christian Life Commission entered its testimony in written form two weeks earlier, and on the day of the hearing Mitchell provided verbal testimony through telephone hookup.

Mitchell's testimony also pointed out that genetic screening has been used as a tool for discrimination in the past. The eugenics movement in the early part of this century called for the involuntary sterilization of many persons who were considered "feeble-minded," "indolent," and "licentious." In 1911, the state of Iowa passed legislation that permitted the sterilization of prisoners for reasons such as drug addiction, sexual offenses and epilepsy.

The Holocaust in Germany was fueled by Hitler's desire for genetic superiority, Mitchell said. "More recently, we can recall our own history of mandatory sickle-cell screening among African-Americans and what some have called the resultant 'public policy disaster.' By 1972 at least a dozen states had passed legislation mandating sickle-cell screening. Social stigmatization and discrimination were based on the results of those tests. As late as 1980, an African-American student was refused admission to the Air Force Academy because he was a sickle-cell carrier, despite the fact that there has never been conclusive evidence that sickle-cell carrier status poses any risk to the individual."

Mitchell said the "focus on the genetic causes of disease can, if we are not very careful, lead us to neglect the social ills that produce discriminatory practices in our country. Just because some are genetically or physically different, doesn't mean they should be treated differently. Stigmatization based upon uncontrollable genetic differences is a very cruel and unjust practice."

He said Southern Baptists have a strong recent history of fighting racial discrimination at every level. "It's easy to translate our hatred of racial discrimination into a hatred for genetically based discrimination," he said.

"I believe that our genetic information is so personal and sensitive that we have a right to know when that information is being gathered, why it is being gathered, and have a right to demand that the information be destroyed," he said.

Genetic screening can be used in the workplace by employers and insurance companies with both positive and negative results, he said. "Genetic screening tests may be used to identify individuals who may be hyper-susceptible to certain occupational hazards, such as industrial chemicals, air pollutants, or manufacturing materials. A person who 'fails' the test, presumably, would be denied employment," said the testimony.

"Insurance companies are especially interested in the use of genetic screening technology. Companies may refuse to hire employees who are found to be at risk for occupation-related illnesses," Mitchell said.

The testimony concluded that because of the human propensity to use good technologies for evil purposes, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission urged that efforts be made to prevent genetic screening from being used for the purpose of elective, nontherapeutic abortions, as a means of discrimination, and as a violation of worker privacy. According to the commission, Christians should resist legislation and public policy that could jeopardize informed public debate on the implications of screening technologies.

Hunger convocation
rescheduled for 1994

By Louis Moore

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist agency representatives unanimously voted to change the date of the denomination's second major hunger convocation to May 13-15, 1994.

"Our decision to reschedule the meeting was based upon a number of factors," said ad hoc committee chair C. Ben Mitchell of the Christian Life Commission. "The denominational emphasis for 1994, 'Help for a Hurting Humanity,' dovetails exactly with an emphasis on world hunger and relief. In addition, we had to take into account the fact that some of the agencies had not had time to make the convocation a part of their planning and budgeting process."

The decision to move the meeting from May 1993 to May 1994 was made at a meeting of the planning committee held in the Christian Life Commission offices in Nashville, Sept. 2.

"As we have been reminded so tragically in Somalia and in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, hunger and relief needs do not go away," Mitchell said. "We all agreed that the hunger convocation was a priority and we needed to do the job right."

The theme of the hunger convocation will be "Serving in Christ's Spirit: Southern Baptists on World Hunger" and will be based on Luke 4:18-19 where Jesus said he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, preach deliverance to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, set people free, and preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

The conference will target Southern Baptist pastors, laypersons and leadership as well as college and seminary students and associational directors of missions. The convocation's goals are to call Southern Baptists to:

- Make hunger and hurting persons a concern of every SBC church.
- Involve churches and individuals in consistent giving to hunger and relief ministries through the Foreign and Home Mission Boards.
- Stimulate widespread media and educational attention in SBC publications and periodicals.
- Involve an increasing number of laypersons in hunger-related ministries.

In addition to plenary sessions with major speakers, the convocation will include workshops to provide practical assistance for participants interested in beginning hunger-related ministries in their own communities. Plans are underway for some who attend the convocation to spend an afternoon helping Asheville, N.C., area ministries feed and house needy persons.

Those who make up the convocation's planning committee include John Cheyne from the Foreign Mission Board, Mike Day of the Brotherhood Commission, Louis Moore of the Christian Life Commission, Nathan Porter of the Home Mission Board, June Whitlow of the Women's Missionary Union, and Mitchell.

Offerings for world and domestic hunger should be sent directly to the Foreign and Home Mission Boards. One hundred percent of monies designated for hunger ministry is used to feed hungry people.

One-woman relief agency
seeks national commemoration

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP)--In early August, Jackie Smith returned home to Key Largo, Fla., from Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, not sure how she was going to carry out a new commitment to Christian service.

By month's end, she was being called a one-woman relief agency by a local newspaper. Now, she is taking her efforts to the president and the nation.

After more than a month of non-stop disaster relief work in south Florida, Smith is asking President George Bush as well as newspapers, television and radio stations across the nation to help commemorate efforts of U.S. servicemembers, volunteers and others who helped south Florida following Hurricane Andrew.

Smith has sent a hand-written fax message to President Bush asking him to support her request for radio stations across the nation to play "God Bless America" on Monday, Oct. 5, at noon, EDT.

She is sending the same message to major newspapers, television stations and radio stations across the nation.

"Throughout the whole country, everyone would be united at the same time. Think of that," Smith said in the informally scrawled message.

Almost immediately after Hurricane Andrew passed through south Florida on Aug. 24, Smith was organizing relief efforts in Key Largo. On Aug. 26, she led a convoy of 13 trucks to Perrine, in the hurricane area.

Later, the Monroe County Sheriff's Department began providing escort for her convoys.

Smith's parents live in Perrine. First Baptist Church of Perrine became Smith's base of operations. She located families that were not getting help from other relief agencies and organized food distribution.

Smith has enlisted a core of between 20 and 50 volunteers from Key Largo who have taken food, furniture and other items to hurricane victims, Phil Foley, reporter for the Keynoter newspaper in Key Largo, wrote in a Sept. 8 story.

She has relied on a network developed at Ridgecrest conference center to provide additional relief supplies. Nancy Burgess, a pastor's wife from Clairmont Hills Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., led sessions for single adult Sunday school leaders which Smith attended.

"Jackie has been calling me telling me what she needs. I've been telling others and helping get things down to her," Burgess said.

Burgess relayed needs as well as prayer requests from Smith to others who had attended the conference sessions at Ridgecrest and many other people who were looking for ways to help.

Burgess said she was confident that supplies sent to Smith would reach persons who needed help.

Foley said he has maintained contact with Smith. "She seems to have more and more going every time I talk with her," he said.

Foley said Smith is no longer working in her job as a hairdresser and is working full time with relief efforts.

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Smith may be contacted in Key Largo at (305) 853-0077 or on a mobile phone at (305) 647-2707.

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Missionary finds relief in
Mississippi knee surgery

By Teresa Dickens

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LAUREL, Miss. (BP)--Ben Tomlison has finally gotten relief. But he never dreamed he would find it in Laurel, Miss.

Tomlison and his wife Bettie -- from Georgia and Texas, respectively -- have served Southern Baptist as missionaries to Taiwan for 27 years. They and their five children, who are now grown, have lived in several locations in the East Asia country and worked in a variety of roles. The couple now lives in Chungli on the campus of Chun Yuan Christian University and works as church planters and church "encouragers."

Throughout his life, Tomlison has enjoyed playing basketball. Even as a missionary, he has played and coached basketball as a hobby.

Eleven years ago that hobby resulted in an injury to his left knee. Although doctors never really pinpointed what exactly happened, problems with the knee have never gone away. To complicate matters, degenerative arthritis set up in the knee. Together, the pain and swelling became so severe last year that Tomlison on occasion would have to sit to give reports and addresses.

"I have been half a missionary this past year," Tomlison said.

Five years ago, doctors told the missionary that he needed to have a complete knee replacement. At the time, Tomlison thought he could "tough it out," but the intense pain during the past year changed his mind.

Knowing that he was nearing furlough, Tomlison contacted Van Williams, medical director with the Foreign Mission Board, about having the surgery while in the states. In turn, Williams contacted Laurel bone specialist John McGraw, who serves the FMB as its orthopedic surgical consultant.

Upon reviewing Tomlison's case, McGraw, a member of First Church, Laurel, confirmed a knee replacement was necessary and offered to do the surgery free of charge to the FMB. He also wrote Tomlison, issuing the same offer and extending an invitation to the missionary couple to stay with him and his family while he recuperated. Tomlison accepted.

The Tomlisons arrived in Laurel Aug. 19 and the surgery was performed two days later. After a week's hospital stay, they moved to McGraw's home, where they stayed until Sept. 14. The couple returned to Dallas, Texas, where they are furloughing.

"The surgery literally gave me new life," Tomlison told the Mississippi newsjournal, The Baptist Record, in late August. "I am looking forward to resuming a normal schedule when I return to Taiwan. I would not have been able to do that if I had not had the surgery."

But the surgery is only a part of the Tomlison's experience in Laurel. "The sweet fellowship is the most important," Tomlison commented. "The care and warmth of the McGraws, their friends and church family, the other doctors and hospital staff, have made my wife and me feel like we are home."

Along with McGraw's services, other medical professionals also donated their time to Tomlison's case. Among them were physicians Thomas Blake, Jack Evans, and John Hassell, and physical therapist Joey Cooley, a deacon at Highland Church.

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"This really has been a group effort," explained McGraw. "People have responded to the Tomlison case with little or no prompting. When I went to the pharmacy to pick up his prescriptions, the pharmacist told me they were free." In addition, he noted, local Baptists provided meals for the household.

"This project has provided all of us an opportunity to give to missions," McGraw said. "We could just give our money to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering or the Cooperative Program -- and we do. But hands-on missions provides a greater blessing. Besides, now we have two new friends."

But the opportunity to give is not over. While in Laurel, McGraw determined that Tomlison's right knee also needs to be replaced. The extra stress on the knee over the past 11 years, as well as arthritis, has caused deterioration in it too. The Tomlisons will return to Laurel Oct. 19, with surgery scheduled Oct. 20. The couple hopes to go home to Taiwan in January.

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\$355,000 given to Southwestern
for Aramaic writing collection

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A \$355,000 gift to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, will be used to establish the Fund for the Preservation and Dissemination of the Aramaic Gospels.

According to officials at Southwestern, the fund will enable the seminary to build and maintain a collection of copies of the world's most important Aramaic documents. The collection will be housed in Southwestern's A. Webb Roberts Library.

Carl Wrottenbery, dean of libraries at the seminary, said the fund will make Southwestern one of the leading research centers for Aramaic studies. Aramaic was spoken in biblical times by Jesus and his disciples.

Money for the preservation fund was given by Thomas F. Bickley, of Bedford, Texas. Bickley is senior design engineer for Technol Corp., a manufacturer of medical supplies.

Bickley said he gave the money to Southwestern so the seminary could make facsimiles of the late Arthur Voobus' collection of Aramaic writings. Voobus, a former professor at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, travelled the world taking photographs of ancient Aramaic documents.

The preservation fund will be used to make copies of Voobus' collection on microfiche, compact discs, "or an equivalent medium." When the copies are completed they will be available to the public for study and research at Southwestern.

Bickley said the collection is not intended to be a "museum piece, but something that would be of use to scholars."

According to Wrottenbery, Voobus' collection was stored in boxes at the Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library at the Lutheran Seminary.

"Only Voobus seemed to know what was on the rolls," Wrottenbery said. "After his death the collection was of little use to researchers because of the absence of an index to the materials."

A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities along with a gift from Bickley has enabled Lutheran Seminary to begin cataloging the materials. When the cataloging is completed, copies of Voobus' originals will be made and transported to Southwestern's Roberts Library.

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"Southwestern Seminary is extremely grateful for this kind of contribution to the life of the school," President Russell H. Dilday said. "Mr. Bickley's gift helps insure that Southwestern will continue as a leader in the study of biblical material."

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Southwestern Seminary dedicates
Bowld Music Library Oct. 20

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--With help from community leaders, alumni and trustees, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will officially open the new Kathryn Sullivan Bowld Music Library Oct. 20.

Following a dedication ceremony at 10 a.m. in the seminary's Truett Auditorium, officials will cut the ribbon to the \$3.5 million library. The ceremonies will include special recognition of the building's namesake, Kathryn Sullivan Bowld, of Memphis, Tenn., who is a two-time graduate of Southwestern.

Bowld has had a 62-year relationship with the seminary since first arriving on the campus in 1930 to become an "evangelistic pianist."

During her early years at the seminary she came under the influence of church music pioneers Edwin McNeeley and I.E. Reynolds, who was the first director of Southwestern's School of Sacred Music. McNeeley and Reynolds encouraged Bowld to pursue a degree in organ, which she completed in 1933. More than 50 years later she returned to Southwestern and earned a master of music degree in conducting.

Bowld and her late husband, William Bowld, have given money to several educational and medical institutions. The medical research center at the University of Tennessee in Memphis is named for William Bowld.

The dedication service and ribbon cutting ceremony for the Bowld Music Library will include music by several performance groups from the seminary's School of Church Music. Current and retired members of the music faculty will take part in the opening. Seminary trustees, who will be holding their semi-annual meeting in conjunction with the dedication, will also participate.

The 31,000-square-foot library offers the latest in academic support, according to Carl Wrotenbery, dean of libraries.

Included in the library is space for printed and recorded music and reference materials, a seminar room, a piano and browsing area, master and doctoral study carrels, reading areas, listening areas and space for administrative staff support.

Wrotenbery said that along with historical and theoretical documents about music, the library houses more than 211,000 printed musical scores and more than 6,000 recordings. An extensive collection of hymns is also housed in the building. The library's Treasure Room contains rare and valuable works.

Among the collections housed in the library is the George Stebbins Memorial Collection, which contains more than 1,200 items. The collection belonged to Stebbins, a popular hymn writer, and was preserved in the Rare Book Room of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., for 50 years before being acquired by Southwestern.

The music library has been constructed so that it is connected to Cowden Hall, which houses the School of Church Music.

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**Southern Baptists take part
in euthanasia project**

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist ethicist and a professor of religion took part in the first of three meetings on euthanasia and assisted suicide sponsored by The Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics, Sept. 11-13.

The Chicago-based center is an independent, not-for-profit medical ethics think tank and publisher of the journal Second Opinion.

C. Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission and Daniel B. McGee, professor of religion at Baylor University are both part of the project. Mitchell is on the working group on public policy, and McGee is on the theologian's working group.

The project's goal includes the publication of a volume that deals with euthanasia and assisted suicide with a special emphasis on the positions of major religious traditions.

"I am delighted that Southern Baptists are represented in the project," said Mitchell. "We all hope that the Park Ridge volume will become a useful resource for examining a variety of denominational perspectives on euthanasia and assisted suicide."

The next phase of the project will take place in Chicago in January 1993.

Representatives from Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions heard a number of speakers address the subjects, including Christine Cassel, Chief of Internal Medicine at the University of Chicago Medical Center and William F. May, Cary M. Maguire Professor of Ethics at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.