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November 8, 1991

91-169

Trustee seeks 'warning,'
but apologizes to faculty

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By Herb Hollinger

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A trustee of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, who publicly requested a "warning" be given to professor E. Glenn Hinson regarding Hinson's teachings, has apologized to seminary faculty and trustees and agreed to work through processes and procedures at the seminary to resolve his grievance with the church history professor.

Louisville, Ky., businessman John Michael told the Indiana Baptist, newsjournal of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, he requested a "warning" in a letter to Roy L. Honeycutt, seminary president, dated July 24.

Michael said he has been awaiting a formal response by Honeycutt but decided to make his request public when called by the Indiana Baptist. The paper published his story in its Nov. 5 edition.

However, seminary faculty and trustees held a retreat this week where Michael said he apologized for publicly airing his grievance. Following the retreat Michael told Baptist Press he is convinced there is an increased vigor among all the parties to find internal ways to resolve such conflicts. A conflict management specialist and Robert E. Cooley, president of Gordon Conwell Seminary, who is also president of the Association of Theological Schools, spoke to the group, Michael said.

Michael said he would not have publicly aired his "warning" request if he had been asked following this week's retreat. However, he said, the Indiana Baptist did quote him correctly. And although still holding the same concerns, Michael said the publicity has made resolving the problem "more difficult."

The chairman of the trustees' personnel committee, Richard D. White, pastor of First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn., said part of the problem is the seminary has had no processes or procedures to deal with conflicts, short of dismissal.

The trustees are going to look at developing procedures whereby dialogues, inquiries and other forms of discipline may be adopted, White said. Presently, he said, there is no mechanism by which the seminary can deal with a request for a "warning," such as requested by Michael.

W. Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarwood Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., and chairman of the trustees, was out of town and unavailable for comment.

In a statement given to Baptist Press today, Honeycutt criticized editors of the Indiana Baptist for choosing to air publicly dated accusations against Hinson "which were dealt with in full some years ago by the seminary's board of trustees."

"Especially do I regret the editorial timing of the story to coincide with one of the more important gatherings of the trustees in my 10 years as president," said Honeycutt.

"God's spirit moved in a marvelous way on our campus this week as trustees, faculty, staff and students continued to build new relationships. Fortunately, the spiritual effects of those experiences prevented the Indiana Baptist story from undermining the purpose of our trustee retreat.

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"Personally, I believe it took courage for trustee John Michael during the retreat to issue his apology for the way he shared his convictions with the Indiana Baptist. For his forthrightness and courage I am grateful. I join trustees and faculty in accepting his apology in the same spirit in which he expressed his regret," said Honeycutt.

"I do not intend to gloss over difficulties nor ignore legitimate concerns related to Southern Seminary; especially any related to the seminary's confessional statement. As president, I shall do everything within my power to help Southern Seminary maintain its doctrinal fidelity and to fulfill our mission of preparing God-called men and women for effective Christian ministry," Honeycutt said.

Michael told the Indiana Baptist Honeycutt had not publicly addressed Michael's confidential request but continued to support Hinson as recently as mid-October when the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees voted to defund Ruschlikon Seminary because of Hinson.

Honeycutt had expressed shock over the FMB decision to withdraw in 1992 funds for the Swiss seminary and "in the process malign the reputation of a renowned Christian scholar.

"This action effectively tries and convicts a respected Southern Baptist leader (Hinson) without a hearing and without recourse. I am dismayed by the unnecessary pain this assault will inflict on Dr. Hinson and I continue to wonder how much longer Southern Baptists will tolerate the devastating effects of partisan politics which have been inflicted on our Baptist way of life," Honeycutt said in a Baptist Press story on Oct. 11.

An attempt to have a face-to-face talk by Michael with Hinson ended without resolution, Michael told the Indiana Baptist. Michael said he discussed the matter with Honeycutt on two occasions in the summer and then decided to make a formal request for a warning regarding Hinson's teachings.

Michael's letter appealed for "a clear, direct warning to Dr. Hinson" in an effort to "preserve our institutional integrity while also being fair with the professor." Michael had advised Honeycutt of his intention to disclose the request, if questioned by the media.

In his letter, Michael raises questions about five views in Hinson's theological positions as given in Hinson's book, "Jesus Christ," the first volume of "Faith of Our Fathers" published in 1977 and in "The Evangelization of the Roman Empire."

The views, as Michael told the Indiana Baptist, are:

- (1) That any portion of scripture is not accurate, factual and historically reliable (despite allowances for parables, metaphors, textual criticism and the differences in Bible versions),
- (2) That Jesus Christ did not rise literally and bodily from the grave, with "flesh and bones," and within historical space and time, as testified by the Gospel accounts,
- (3) That Jesus Christ lacked any consciousness of divinity or deity, or that Jesus Christ is not fully God as well as fully man,
- (4) That Jesus Christ was ever in error, and
- (5) That non-Christian religions are to be affirmed or encouraged.

Southern Seminary officials made available to Baptist Press Hinson's response to a SBC Peace Committee inquiry of similar nature some years ago. Hinson said he does believe God raised Jesus from the dead as the "firstfruits" of all those who believe through Jesus.

"When Jesus was raised, he assumed a glorified body no longer subject to limitations of space and time such as we experience," said Hinson. "This was no resuscitation of a corpse; Jesus entered into an incorruptible state in which he would never die. The transformation of an earthly body into a heavenly body evidently explains why the disciples had trouble recognizing him and how he could appear among them suddenly through closed doors.

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"At the same time, I believe the body which God transformed was the very body placed in the tomb on Good Friday, for the disciples found the tomb empty and did recognize Jesus. Because the resurrection of Jesus is the only one that has ever occurred, however, we cannot 'prove' it; we must believe it. It is the article of faith without which Christianity cannot exist," said Hinson.

Some seminary officials have said people who are critical of Hinson's views are taking his writings out of context, Michael said.

"I, as a Southern Baptist, have looked carefully at his material and I have not misunderstood his views. I believe his teachings can reasonably be interpreted as outside the bounds of doctrinal orthodoxy," Michael told the Indiana Baptist.

Acknowledging Hinson's right to personal views and interpretations, and that these may change and evolve over time, Michael believes Hinson disqualifies himself from teaching at Southern Seminary if his teachings are not in accordance with the Abstract of Principles and he persists in teaching them.

"Our charter, our policies, our employment contracts, our personal faith and our Southern Baptist constituency all demand that professors of the seminary faithfully teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Abstract of Principles," Michael said.

The letter calls for Honeycutt to prepare for trustee approval "an appropriate warning" to Hinson which will "communicate to the professor that any future advocacy of the positions outlined would be grounds for dismissal."

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Southern trustees
approve five-year plan

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
11/8/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved a five-year plan for the seminary aimed at coping with flat revenues and a shrinking base of traditional seminary students.

Approval of the five-year plan was the only item of business considered by trustees of the Louisville, Ky., seminary at a brief business session during their Nov. 4-6 retreat.

Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt said the seminary began the process of outlining goals and objectives for five-year increments in 1987. The process was designed to produce a "dynamic plan" which is assessed and revised annually, he said. It has 13 institutional goals that address such issues as the school's academic programs, facilities needs, enrollment objectives, denominational service and employee compensation. Various seminary academic and administrative units have been assigned a total of 109 goals which support the 13 institutional goals.

The seminary has moved recently from a "needs-based to a resource-based planning model," said seminary Provost Larry L. McSwain. Stagnant Cooperative Program growth has forced the seminary to re-evaluate its planning process, he said.

Total seminary revenue next year, he noted, is expected to be \$66,000 less than the current year. While the seminary will attempt to shuffle funds within the budget to fund salary increases, McSwain warned: "We did that last year and we did that the year before. We're getting to the point that we can't do that any more."

The seminary must secure more of its revenue through development efforts, said McSwain. He told trustees a positive public image of the seminary is essential to attract more contributions from donors: "That's the direction we want to move. We need your help to do that."

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Southern will have to turn its attention to non-traditional students in order to meet its goal of ending the decade with an enrollment of 3,000 in all programs, McSwain said. Last year's total enrollment was 3,091. "We have to look at ethnic and older populations as the sources of future enrollment," he emphasized.

Demographic studies, he said, show declining numbers of young, white adults, the population group that traditionally has been the mainstay of seminary enrollment. In addition, fewer college students are expressing an interest in a ministry vocation, said McSwain.

In executive session, trustees also heard a progress report from Honeycutt on the search for a dean of the School of Theology. Following the meeting, Honeycutt confirmed a nationwide search begun last summer had resulted in 27 candidates for the position.

A "short list" shared confidentially during the retreat with trustees and faculty had received "enthusiastic response," he added.

In keeping with a covenant agreement between trustees and faculty adopted at the board's annual meeting last April, Honeycutt plans to appoint "an evangelical conservative scholar" to the post.

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Allen praises
trustee retreat

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
11/8/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees experienced "a movement of God" during a Nov. 4-6 retreat at the Louisville, Ky., school, according to board Chairman W. Wayne Allen.

Allen, pastor of Briarwood Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., said the retreat led by an accreditation agency president and a conflict management expert has "drawn trustees together in a greater bond of love for one another and the entire seminary community."

Several trustees expressed hope the retreat would build on a covenant renewal agreement between trustees and faculty adopted seven months earlier.

Trustees heard an address on seminary governance by Association of Theological Schools President Robert E. Cooley, president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass. They also participated in conflict management seminars led by George Parsons, senior consultant with the Alban Institute in Eugene, Ore. The retreat was funded through a grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. in Indianapolis.

Allen said trustees gained a greater appreciation for approaching conflict resolution positively and following proper procedures in seminary governance. "There is a united commitment to follow existing procedures and to develop additional processes in a spirit of Christian love and fairness," he said.

During the retreat, trustees met with faculty and a select group of students in separate sessions facilitated by Parsons. All parties "shared from the heart their hurts and concerns," said Allen.

The fact neither Parsons nor Cooley are Southern Baptists aided the process, he said: "They are not sided in the controversy. Both came from a wide experience with diverse groups and have unquestioned credentials and obvious skills."

The retreat helped trustees begin to learn ways to "manage value differences" without sharp divisiveness, added trustee Richard White, pastor of First Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn., and chairman of the board's academic personnel committee.

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The 10 trustees who joined the 63-member board this year may have derived the biggest benefit from the retreat, he said: "They had heard all of the horror stories of the past (controversies) and none of that was present. So they were very positive about it."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) dated 11/7/91, please make the following correction in story titled "Supreme Court hears arguments in Lee v. Weisman case."

Delete the entire 9th paragraph from the end, which begins "Thomas said., "I don't think (the court)"

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Latin Pentecostal movement has
little effect on Hispanic Baptists

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
11/8/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Pentecostalism and liberation theology -- movements that have rocked the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America -- have had a modest impact on Southern Baptist Hispanic churches, the denomination's top language-ministry leader said.

"The people want to have a different kind of worship, but they're not necessarily seeking Pentecostalism," reported Oscar Romo, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language church extension division.

Pentecostalism, the charismatic church renewal movement best known for worship involving "speaking in tongues," has siphoned hundreds of thousands of members from the Catholic Church in Central and South America.

Some "ultra-traditional" Hispanic Baptists have tabbed some new trends in worship -- periods of prayer for the sick, clapping, spontaneous testimonies -- as Pentecostalism, Romo said.

"It depends on how you define 'Pentecostalism,'" he added. "We're having more free expression in our churches here, and the churches that permit more expression are the churches that are growing. But this is a change in type of worship, rather than Pentecostalism.

"The people don't look so much for Pentecostalism, but for a place where they can come and express themselves. For example, churches that permit the singing of choruses are the churches that are growing."

In some ways, Hispanic churches' movement to more informal worship is a movement back to their roots, Romo noted. "Worship style is related to socio-economic levels. The higher they are on the ladder, the more people prefer traditional worship. Our (Hispanic) churches used to be loose, but as we got 'educated,' we got more traditional."

Liberation theology's impact on Hispanic Southern Baptist churches has been similar to Pentecostalism's -- more emotional and psychological than doctrinal, Romo reported.

"Liberation theology is here. It's impacting us," he said. "It is imported by young ministers who grew up in other countries amid liberation theology and immigrate to the United States."

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But Romo, whose job involves providing financial support for young Hispanic churches, has helped build a communications system to screen potential pastors for those churches. He regularly contacts Baptist leaders in Central and South America to talk about young preachers.

A positive spin-off of liberation theology has been a sense of independence gained by many new Hispanic churches, Romo said.

"There are more groups coming together and not asking for financial support," he explained. "In the past, we gauged our growth entirely by those (new churches) we financed, but not any more."

For example, a recent consultation of ethnic Southern Baptist leadership identified 20,500 places where new churches are needed. This contrasts with 14,000 identified by state missions directors.

"These (ethnic) guys are not talking about money, but starting new churches," Romo said. Liberation theology "has given them a sense of empowerment to start churches."

A down side to this rush of church-starting energy has been an increased involvement of pastors who are not Southern Baptists and do not understand how Southern Baptists operate, he noted.

"They were Baptists in their country, but they are not Southern Baptists when they get here," he said. "They come here and do well economically and want to have their own mission work. But they don't have any idea about the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, the Lottie Moon Christmas offering, the Cooperative Program (unified budget) or the local association.

"I've been advocating doing more orientation, especially for new leaders, about what Southern Baptists are all about."

Such orientation will continue to be important, Romo predicted: "I don't think liberation theology has died. It's taking a new phase, but we haven't seen where it's going yet."

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Cuban evangelistic tour participants
overwhelmed by results and churches

Wendy Ryan

Baptist Press
11/8/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--A delegation of Baptist pastors and leaders who were allowed to preach evangelistically in Cuba since that country's revolution has just returned with a report that the nine days spent ministering with Baptists in Cuba during which time they saw more than 900 people make first time decisions to follow Jesus Christ was like "a first century Christian experience."

"It was fantastic," said Enrique Torres, an associate executive minister of the American Baptist Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society, "Every worship service was packed to capacity, and people were even standing on the outside."

"We felt like revival was happening and breaking out in every place" said Michael Catlett, senior pastor of the Southern Baptist McLean (Va.) Baptist Church.

Catlett and Torres were two of the 13 English-and Spanish-speaking American Baptist and Southern Baptist pastors and leaders in the Cuban evangelistic tour sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance, which visited Cuba from Oct. 25 to Nov. 4, led by Tony Cupit, BWA director of evangelism.

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More than 2,000 decisions that included the first time call to follow Jesus Christ, be baptized, or recommit to the Christian faith were made in response to the evangelistic preaching of the 13 leaders who spoke in the 129 churches of the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba. The Eastern Convention, which has been in partnership with the American Baptist Churches USA since 1899, specifically had requested this evangelistic emphasis.

"Wherever we went in Cuba, we saw a tremendous thirst for the gospel, especially among young people" said Cupit.

"The response was just marvelous" said Daniel Sanchez, professor of missiology at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Forth Worth, Texas. "The statistics do not begin to express all that took place. The seed of the gospel was sown in many hearts, as well as those who made commitments. I preached 10 times and there were decisions every single time."

Catlett said he preached nine times and "only one time was there a seat available. At all times the churches were completely full. "There is a great hunger for the gospel," he said.

"How they evangelize," says Torres who was impressed by the Baptists and the sacrifices they make to preach the gospel. While he saw many first-time decisions to accept Jesus Christ, Torres was moved by "more than one hundred young people who came forward in response to the call to the gospel ministry and to go to seminary."

Because of this hunger for the gospel of Jesus Christ, delegation members worked hard to preach in as many services as possible with each person preaching in churches at least twice a day. When they were not in church, they were making "innumerable pastoral calls," speaking in schools and hospitals even doing personal witnessing, a sign of a new openness to religion in Cuba.

"Personal witnessing on the street, in buses and in trains is acceptable and effective," said Cupit. "There is great openness everywhere." A delegation member witnessed to a young medical doctor on the plane flying from Manzanillo to Havana after she had asked him to tell her "all about Jesus Christ", and she made a personal commitment on the plane. Later that night, she accompanied the team to church in Havana and made a public confession.

Cupit said at one small town, his recorded invitation to visit the church was played on a public address system across the community.

Apart from evangelism, the visit also served to strengthen Cuban Baptist leaders. "One of the best contributions we made was strengthening the churches" said Cupit, who like the others was deeply moved by the faith of Cuban Baptists. "I was most impressed by the strong faith of the church" said Catlett, "and especially that of the young people."

"They have set their mind on evangelizing their county," Claas said.

Southern Baptist members of the BWA evangelistic delegation to Cuba were: Justice Conrad Anderson, director of the Center of Mission and Evangelism at Southwestern Seminary; Catlett; Jerry Johnson, director of missions, Baptist General Convention of Texas; Rodney Johnson, dentist, Kingsville, Texas; Louis Dean Majette, pastor, Oxhill Baptist Church, Chantilly, Va.; Sanchez; Isaac Torres, consultant, Hispanic affairs, Baptist General Convention of Texas; Daniel Lee Wooldridge, pastor, First Baptist Church, Kingsville, Texas.