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April 15, 1994

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Shooting victim, BSSB battle  
guns, senseless violence

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

**NASHVILLE (BP)**--It was 12:30 a.m. on July 29, 1992. Debbie Lewis was driving north on Interstate 295 in Jacksonville, Fla., to pick up her husband from work. Just as she was leaning over to turn up the radio volume on a favorite song, a car drove up beside her and blasted her with two shots from a handgun.

One of the bullets drove into the driver's door two inches below the window.

The other slammed through Lewis' ear, severing an artery, fracturing two vertebra and paralyzing her left vocal chord before a piece of the bullet lodged into the right side of her cheek.

To this day, Lewis' assailants are unknown. And the reasons they shot her also remain a mystery.

"The police arrested two boys. They think it was these kids, but they didn't have enough evidence to hold them," Lewis said, noting speculation is that it might have been a gang-related initiation. "Once they catch whoever it is, I want to find out what was on their minds."

Lewis, a member of Jacksonville's Shindler Drive Baptist Church, said the impact of this "senseless violence" committed against her continues. The immediate effect hurled her family and friends into anguish. After the shots, Lewis' red Toyota 4-runner ran off the interstate and plunged deep into the woods. Seven and a half hours passed before anyone discovered her.

"I asked God to take care of my family," Lewis recalled praying as she was shot. "And I remained very calm. But I was wondering what was going through their (the assailants') minds. What would possess them to do something like that?"

"My thing now is, I'm not mad at the person for shooting me, but I'm angry with what they put my family and friends through."

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Besides the physical r percussions of the shooting injury (she speaks differently because of the severed vocal chord, she lost the hearing in her 1 ft ear and her face was paralyzed), the motional pain is ongoing.

"I still have a hard time driving. Sometimes I get panic or anxiety attacks while driving. And I don't like to be in larg , noisy places because I can't hear out of one ear and I become disoriented."

And if that wasn't enough pain for Lewis, seven months later she and her family encountered a more severe tragedy.

A friend of Lewis' son, JJ, visited the family's house to show JJ what he had just purchased on the parking lot of the local high school. It was a 380 semi-automatic handgun.

"JJ thought it was a toy, so the friend pulled the trigger thinking the gun wasn't loaded," Lewis said.

It was. The bullet ripped through an aorta in JJ's abdomen. Then 15, JJ lived six more hours.

"While we were waiting in the hospital when my son was in surgery, I heard his voice say, 'Mom, I love you, and I'm fine now.' I knew then he was gone."

Lewis decided then and there that her son's death would serve a purpose.

Since that time, she and her family have traveled locally to schools, community centers and juvenile detention facilities to speak out against guns and senseless violence. (Lewis was on the TV talk shows, "Geraldo" and "Inside Edition" soon after she was shot.)

"That kid who accidentally shot my son thought if he bought a gun, he would be a big person. Well, he wasn't. He was eventually charged with juvenile manslaughter.

"Kids are kids and peer pressure nowadays is hard on them. They think they have to be cool, and one way to be cool is to have a gun. The problem is when some of them get angry, they use them before they think. "Or they commit a senseless violence like they did when they shot me and my son."

That fear is in the forefront of many teen-agers' minds, said Paul Turner, design editor in the Baptist Sunday School Board's youth discipleship area. Three years of research and writing has recently culminated in a workbook about violence that church youth leaders can use in their classes, he said. Several authors have contributed to the workbook that is produced by the board's discipleship and family youth/children/preschool department.

"Violence: the Desensitized Generation" is a complete 13-week Bible study that deals with violence in music, in media, in language, at home, in gangs, in dating, in revenge and to self, he said.

"Those who have been victimized by violence know how heinous it can be," Turner said. "Our society has become saturated with violence. And adults and youth are becoming more desensitized to it.

"This resource helps teens look at the issues related to violence and ff rs sound, biblical advise in helping youth know how to proactively respond to it."

Bo Irvin, a correctional program manager for the Tennessee Department of Youth Development, noted, for example, "kids are getting more and more bold with guns."

The proliferation and accessibility of guns, Irvin said, is making it easier for teens to get them.

"And that is having a snowball effect," said the volunteer youth worker at Tusculum Hills Baptist Church in Nashville.

"Kids know other kids carry guns and weapons, so they begin carrying them. Guns are a status symbol. They carry them to show them off," he said. "Many times they have no intention of using them."

Guns at school is making it hard for the good kids to relax, Irvin said.

"It's causing a lot of stress. Even the good kids who would never carry guns or use drugs see all the publicity about guns and violence and they believe true danger is there."

Irvin said now if a person gets angry with another person "you never know" what might happen.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following analysis and eight others about various kinds of violence will be posted in SBCNet News Room April 18. They also are available from the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family youth/children/preschool department. They are condensed from the writers who contributed to "Violence: The Desensitized Generation," a new youth-oriented workbook released by the board.

## ANALYSIS

Evaluate Hollywood violence  
from a biblical standpoint

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

By Norman Miller & Mark Coppenger

NASHVILLE (BP)--Teen-agers today are swimming in a black sea of media violence. "Friday the 13th," "Nightmare on Elm Street" and "License to Kill" have replaced "Mighty Mouse," "The Lone Ranger" and "The Ten Commandments," proving that film violence grows more graphic, pervasive and perverse.

During the 1960s, film violence took a quantum leap in horror. Innovative special effects included exploding blood packets and latex/mechanical monsters.

Though television gore was less graphic, the cars, the wounded and the dead piled up just the same.

The scope of media violence is greater today, but the tradition of theatrical violence is an old one: as old as Greek drama, where Medea poked out her own eyes, and Shakespeare, where swordplay was commonplace.

Violence remains commonplace. One comedian, for example, said he attended a fist fight and a hockey game broke out.

The comment indicates that America has developed a subculture of violence. In some sports, as an example, players and fans can become hardened to outrageous behavior, and normally violent things are not only excused but are expected.

The same numbing effect occurs in a society constantly exposed to film violence. Sensitivities are blunted, and violence becomes an acceptable form of entertainment. Sometimes, violence becomes an acceptable response to difficult personal situations.

Violence itself is morally neutral, however, much the same as money. God uses violence and he ordains it for humans, making it acceptable (Rom. 13:1-7). On the other hand, violence can be quite wicked and condemned by God (Prov. 6:16-17).

Violent content in a film does not necessarily make a movie objectionable; how the film portrays violence is the clincher.

Not all violence is the same. Some is just, some unjust. Some is exaggerated, some sanitized. Some is slanted, some fair. Some is necessary to the story, some unnecessary.

The Bible treats violence differently than today's filmmakers. Consider Jael driving a tent peg through Sisera's head, David decapitating Goliath, Cain murdering Abel, the brutal stoning of Stephen and the utter cruelty of our Lord's crucifixion.

In striking contrast to modern movie fare, these biblical accounts are dignified, restrained, essential to the story and spiritually illustrative. They show the cruelty of sin, nobility in suffering and the wrath of God. The biblical distinctions provide a conceptual scalpel rather than a blunt instrument.

Chances are, parents have never sorted through the issues of media violence. Christian families should discuss the issues with the expectation that parents and youth will find good grounds for thoughtful, biblical and prayerful consideration. Decisions concerning what is appropriate should be based on biblical examples and principles and should be moderated by the acknowledgment that the Bible treats violence with reserve and honesty.

Some good questions to prompt discussion about film violence might include the following

- Is it necessary? honest? manipulative?
- Could you recommend such a film to a friend?

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-- Has any film or program with violence ever strengthened your Christian walk or weakened your Christian walk?

Parents in the Christian community should stick together by sharing suggestions and warnings about upcoming or current programs. This keeps families from wasting their money and lives on screen garbage.

Numerous other resources can help parents defend their families against the attacks of media violence. Some of those sources are:

-- Michael Medved's "Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values." He has a good chapter on film violence.

-- Tipper Gore's "Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society" focuses primarily on rock lyrics and videos. She features a helpful list of addresses of television networks, parents groups, etc.

-- Trauma Center Plus. "Media: Standards to Gauge By" and "War: Justifiable or Just Inevitable?"

-- "Mass Media and Violence: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence," published by the U.S. Government. An invaluable, 500-page resource. Check your public library.

-- Sharon Kissack's "Reel Review," by calling (900) 903-1117.

-- Ted Baehr's "Ted Baehr Presents Movieguide: A Family Guide to Movies and Entertainment." This includes reviews with quality and acceptability ratings.

For more information related to this topic and other issues related to violence, see the new resource "Violence: The Desensitized Generation" (5280-55) produced by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division and available by calling 1-800-458-2772 or by visiting your local Baptist Book Store or Lifeway Christian Store.

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Miller is a newswriter at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Coppenger is vice president for convention relations for the SBC Executive Committee and editor of SBC Life.

Evacuated Rwanda missionaries  
regroup, plan what to do next

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--The sand and surf of the Indian Ocean won't soon relax 10 Southern Baptist missionaries just evacuated from Rwanda.

But a few days of assigned "R & R" in Mombasa, Kenya, will be a start as the missionary families cope with memories of friends left behind in the bleeding African nation and ponder when -- and if -- they will get to return to Rwanda and what they will do until then.

Even the memory of the tribal warfare between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples, which has left at least 20,000 dead, including religious and relief workers, has not dampened their missionary ardor.

"I think we all want to go back as soon as we can -- if we can," Larry Randolph, mission administrator, said in Nairobi, Kenya, at an April 14 meeting of evacuated Rwanda missionaries with John Faulkner, Foreign Mission Board administrator for Eastern and Southern Africa.

"But for now we think we need to have some time as a group to talk and pray and think," Randolph said.

Contending with violence left the missionaries physically and mentally drained after living through three days of tribal bloodletting. Most of the missionaries left the country in U.S. Embassy-sponsored convoys, which drove into Burundi. From there, the U.S. military placed them aboard transport planes and flew them to Nairobi.

Faulkner has placed the missionaries on administrative leave, with full support, until May 10 so they can regroup and the board can decide where they should be assigned next.

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"We want to keep you together so you can play together and pray together and worship together," he told the missionaries. "It's not a good idea to make many decisions these first several days after going through such a traumatic experience, but after resting for a few days you can begin to talk about contingency plans and consider if you want a counselor to help you deal with feelings of loss and anger and fear," he said.

"By May 10 we ought to have a better idea of the situation in Rwanda and what you can do. The second plan, if no doors are opening for you to return, is to offer you other interim assignments in other countries."

One option would be for the displaced missionaries to work with refugees from the two warring tribes.

The Hutu and Tutsi peoples of Rwanda and neighboring Burundi have a long history of tribal enmity. The Tutsis, heavily outnumbered by Hutus in both countries, were feudal leaders over the Hutus for centuries. The roles began to reverse after both countries gained independence from Belgium in 1962. Since then, the two ethnic groups have been locked in a protracted struggle that has killed tens of thousands, left more than 1 million homeless and sent hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring into surrounding countries.

Now those in Rwanda are fighting to get out alongside the hundreds of thousands of new refugees.

The organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Burundi voted April 14 to invite anyone from the Rwanda mission who wants to come to Burundi to work with the ebb and flow of humanity.

Jimmy Foster, director of the Foreign Mission Board's human needs effort, plans to begin working with missionaries from Rwanda and Burundi on relief plans.

"I think there will be a concentration of refugees on the borders (with Rwanda and Burundi)," he said. "We will implement relief efforts to these refugees."

Part of the work will be financed by \$54,650 in hunger relief funds the Foreign Mission Board released April 7.

The Rwanda missionaries questioned Faulkner about how soon they could get a survey team in to get a firsthand look at the situation.

"That decision is up to you, just like the decision to evacuate or stay," Faulkner responded. (Foreign Mission Board policy is to support the decision of the missionary in dangerous situations, whatever it is.)

"You don't need permission to go back but I would ask that you don't send any families back in -- just two or three men go back first. One good indicator is when commercial airlines begin flying into Kigali again," Faulkner said.

Southern Baptist mission personnel evacuated from Rwanda, in addition to the Hootens from Knoxville, Tenn., are Larry and Diane Randolph, from Oakman, Ala., and Dallas respectively; Vernon and Sandi Sivage, from Midland and Wheeler, Texas, respectively, and their daughter; Martha Colwell, from Athens, Ga.; Stan and Marlene Lee, both from Greenville, S.C., and their daughter; Marty Felts, from Tyler, Texas; and Katrina Knox, from Columbia, Tenn.

Knox returned to the United States April 13 for vacation.

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EEOC to extend comment period  
for new religious guidelines

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is reopening the public comment period on controversial religious harassment guidelines, a congressional source said.

EEOC acting chairman Tony Gallegos said in an April 14 meeting with two congressmen the comment period was being extended until May 15, said Heath Ingram, legislative aide to Rep. Buck McKeon, R.-Calif. Officially, however, the discussion time has not been extended yet, an EEOC spokesperson said April 15.

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An extension will enable more citizens to comment on proposed federal employment guidelines which critics have said may severely inhibit religious freedom in the work place.

The guidelines would apply the definitions used for sexual harassment to religion and other classifications. If the guidelines are issued as proposed, they may force employers to make their work place a religion-free zone, some lawyers have said.

Concerns about the guidelines were not widely reported until after the two-month public comment period closed Nov. 30. Comments continued to arrive at the EEOC office during the review period. In the April 14 meeting, Gallegos said the comments were in a "lot of boxes," said Ingram.

"They have been stunned," Ingram said. The EEOC "had absolutely no idea" it would receive this kind of response to the religious harassment guidelines, she said.

"It just goes to show that people can make a difference when they get involved," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Even federal bureaucrats have to sit up and pay attention when citizens air such critical concerns as are raised by these regulations.

"It's even more critical for people to use this window of opportunity to flood the EEOC and their representatives in Congress with their concerns about this proposal," Smith said.

Smith warned the EEOC will "use it against us" if there is not a significant response during the new period from opponents of the guidelines.

Southern Baptists and others may send their comments to: Tony Gallegos, Acting Chairman; EEOC; 1801 L. St. NW; Washington, DC 20507. They may write their senators at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 and representative at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

No date for issuing the guidelines has been set, Ingram said.

The proposed guidelines define harassment as verbal or physical conduct, as well as writing or art, which "denigrates or shows hostility or aversion" toward an individual because of his or her religion or that of his or her "relatives, friends or associates."

Among other definitions of harassment under the guidelines: It has the "purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment." The employer would have a responsibility to maintain an environment free of such harassment.

Some lawyers have said such guidelines could result in harassment charges against employers and employees for witnessing to subordinates or fellow workers, having religious art or gospel literature in an office or using phrases such as "Praise the Lord."

"Religion should be left out of the guidelines altogether," GLC General Counsel Michael Whitehead has said. "The agency and courts have enforced the existing law since 1964 without such guidelines, and they should continue to do so."

Not only evangelical Christians and other religious communities have expressed opposition to the proposal. McKeon and 44 other members of the House of Representatives signed a letter to Gallegos asking the EEOC to remove the category of religion from the guidelines.

In addition to McKeon and his staff, Gallegos met April 14 with Rep. Ernest Istook, R.-Okla., and staff for Rep. Major Owens, D.-N.Y.; Sen. Dan Coats, R.-Ind.; and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, Ingram said.

**O.S. Hawkins asks examination  
of SBC, CBF leaders' theology**      **By Herb Hollinger**

DALLAS (BP)--A leading conservative pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention has called for a comparative examination of the theology of SBC and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship leadership and "then let our individual churches choose this day with whom they will serve."

O.S. Hawkins, pastor of historic First Baptist Church in Dallas, issued the challenge in his column in the church's April newsletter, "Vision."

Hawkins said he had "purposefully waited" to address the firing of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Russell H. Dilday Jr. "until the dust has settled a bit before addressing the current denominational issues ... and more specifically the new Cooperative Baptist Fellowship."

Hawkins urged Baptist state papers to provide information on the "theology of some of the leadership of the moderate movement."

If the information was provided, Hawkins said in his column, "Southern Baptists would discover that the issues might well be as much about purity and theology as they are about power and philosophy!

"A good place to begin," said Hawkins, would be the leaders' beliefs about the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. He cited a Christianity Today magazine article which quoted Cecil Sherman, the chief executive officer of the CBF, as saying, "A teacher who might also be led by Scripture not to believe in the virgin birth should not be fired."

Baptist Press interviewed Sherman and his counterpart at the SBC Executive Committee, Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer, using Hawkins' suggestion.

The Aug. 5, 1983, Christianity Today article quotes Sherman as explaining how the virgin birth was in two gospels but not in the other two.

"Did Mark and John make a mistake by forgetting to list it? If the virgin birth is desperately important, (Mark and John) must have erred," Sherman is quoted in the magazine.

"Friend, how can one be led by Scripture not to believe in the virgin birth?" Hawkins wrote. "And, how can any Southern Baptist leader, in the most historic sense of the word, question the importance of the virgin birth?"

In the interview with Baptist Press April 15, Sherman responded: "I believe in the virgin birth, every word of it. I believe Jesus was born of the spirit and of the virgin Mary."

Sherman said the magazine article was published at a time when discussions revolved around professors at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, who did not believe in the virgin birth. The seminary was partially supported by the SBC through its Foreign Mission Board at the time, although that connection was severed later by the FMB.

Asked if a professor at a SBC seminary or Baptist college did not believe in the virgin birth, what would he do, Sherman said the question was hypothetical.

"I would have to put that alongside other data," Sherman said.

Chapman, in his interview, said, "It is unthinkable to me that anyone who does not believe Jesus Christ to be virgin-conceived and virgin-born would ever be allowed to teach in one of our Southern Baptist institutions."

Regarding the significance of the virgin birth, Sherman said "others give it first importance but its place in the Bible does not suggest that. You don't base big theology on a narrow Bible base."

Sherman said, in illustration, there are many places in the Bible where Christians are taught to be "kind to our slaves" and many lines where they are told to be "obedient to the emperor (of Rome)."

Chapman said, "The Bible says Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He was born without a sin nature and with God as his father. The virgin birth is essential to our salvation because only a sinless Savior could atone for our sin and save us."

Chapman also quoted Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1:26-38 which, he said, declare the fact of the virgin birth. "Therefore, it is a matter of belief in or rejection of the Word of God."

The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement of the SBC reads in its section on "God the Son," the second sentence: "In his incarnation as Jesus Christ he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary."

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HMB directors address  
universalism, Freemasonry

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Home Mission Board directors adopted a statement condemning universalism at their annual spring meeting while rejecting a request to study whether Masons should be prohibited from serving as home missionaries.

The statement on universalism came in response to criticism of the board's report on Freemasonry presented to the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston last summer.

"May this forever and eternally be very clear," said board chairman Brad Allen following the unanimous vote to accept the statement, prepared by the board's administrative committee.

HMB President Larry Lewis told Baptist Press, "The obvious consensus of our board is that they do not want further involvement with the Freemasonry issue and that we have dealt with this issue as thoroughly and adequately as we are able."

Messengers to the 1993 SBC meeting adopted the recommendation that many Masonic teachings are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, while other teachings are. Among those things found incompatible was that universalism "permeates the writings of many Masonic authors."

The recommendation stated membership in a Masonic Order must be a matter of personal conscience, but exhorted "Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of the findings of this report as led by the Holy Spirit of God."

The April 13 statement by the board reads, in part: "It has never been the intention of the HMB to suggest that individual Southern Baptists may feel justified in affiliating with such (universalist) teaching on the basis of personal conscience."

"In light of the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of Scripture and the findings of the report, then personal conscience may be used," the statement continued.

"Remember, Abraham used his personal conscience and it produced an Ishmael," said Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church of Duncan, Okla.

Eleven directors signed and, during a break in the meeting, distributed a document intended to clarify their interpretation of the HMB report on Freemasonry. The document said, "Southern Baptists cannot ignore the spread of an erroneous gospel by a group numbering 4 million in the United States. It is our strong conviction that membership in a Masonic lodge should be avoided."

However, passage of the statement on universalism apparently addressed their concerns, because the document by the 11 directors was not presented to the full board. Wyndham Cook Jr., of Magnolia, Ark., said the adopted statement should satisfy him and the other signers. "It sounded like enough," he said. "I'll have to read it to be sure."

The editor of a Masonic journal, however, told Baptist Press later that Freemasonry does not teach universalism or any other religious belief. Masonic writers' religious beliefs do not reflect the organization's teachings, he said.

"Freemasonry, despite what other people may say, does not make theological statements of this sort or any sort, other than the belief in a deity," said John Boettjer, of the Scottish Rite Journal of Freemasonry. "That's as far as we go theologically."

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"It certainly, I hope, does not make us a religion to say that religion is the province of the individual," he added.

Director Tommy Futrell, pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Johnson City, Tenn., was among those who said they want to be done with the issue. "When we walk away from it, I want it laid aside by this body for good."

Freemasonry critic Larry Holly called the statement "a step in the right direction, but it does not begin to address the problems with Freemasonry."

Holly predicted Freemasonry "will continue to plague the Home Mission Board until they do address it straightforwardly."

"In an attempt to avoid the issue they're only perpetuating the issue," he said. He added, however he has no plans to bring the matter before the SBC annual convention in June in Orlando, Fla.

After the statement's unanimous adoption, director Jim Guenther, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Schenectady, N.Y., made a motion that the administrative committee study barring Masons from serving as home missionaries.

Director John Avant, pastor of Northrich Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas, opposed the request, saying the board had more important matters. "The people in my church and the lost people in my community, they don't care about this issue."

The motion appeared to pass 30-29 until board secretary Linda Principe, of Brandenburg, Ky., said she had not voted and wished to vote against it. The tie required the action of chairman Allen, who also voted against the motion.

In defeating the motion, Allen said he favored the use of the interview process that would reveal the views of missionary candidates. "If they stand with the doctrine of universalism, turn them down."

After that vote, director Wendell Estep, pastor of First Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., said he was burdened to see the board divided after uniting in its earlier vote. "I think we really need to come together to make an impact for Christ."

Director Everett Geis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Delhi, La., said, however, "We can disagree as long as we're not disagreeable."

In a related matter, HMB President Larry Lewis told directors that all copies of the agency's study of Freemasonry had been distributed, and no more would be produced.

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HMB directors clarify  
statement on Freemasonry

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Home Mission Board directors adopted a statement to clarify their stand on universalism. The original statement came from the administrative committee and was adopted by the full board. The text of the motion follows:

"In light of all questions that have arisen and confusion concerning Freemasonry, and the recommendation that was made to the Southern Baptist Convention by the Home Mission Board and in order that there be no misinterpretation, the Board of Directors wish to reiterate the longstanding position of the HMB on the subject of universalism: Whether it be the teaching of a religious body, a fraternal order, or an individual, the universalist plan for human redemption is unbiblical and heretical, and we oppose the embrace or perpetuation of any such teaching.

"It has never been the intention of the HMB to suggest that individual Southern Baptists may feel justified in affiliating with such teaching on the basis of personal conscience. Rather, we would call upon fellow Southern Baptists to never embrace or perpetuate such heresy.

"In the spirit of the above, and in light of the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of Scripture, and the findings of the report, then personal conscience may be used."

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HMB directors discuss  
financial issues, CBF

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP)--In addition to clarifying their stand on Freemasonry, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board directors addressed financial issues and elected officers during their April 12-14 meeting.

The board also elected four new staff members and appointed 13 missionaries, while the chaplains commission endorsed 33 chaplains.

Board members unanimously passed a statement on Freemasonry that said any organization that espouses universalism as the "plan for human redemption is unbiblical and heretical." The board, however, narrowly rejected a call to consider not appointing missionaries who are Masons. (See related story.)

In his annual address, President Larry Lewis noted 1,500 churches were started last year and 74,860 people served as HMB volunteers. The areas of greatest concern, Lewis said, are decreased baptisms and projected budget reductions due to declines in Cooperative Program and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering gifts.

"I'm concerned about pioneer mission states that do not have enough money now," said Everett Geis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dehli, La. He called for other areas to "bite the bullet so that our pioneer mission states will not have to take further cuts."

The 1995 budget will be 6 percent less than the 1994 budget, but that does not mean every state will have a 6 percent reduction in HMB funds, Lewis said. The Atlanta staff is reducing its budget so that cuts on the field will be minimal, he said.

The new Home Mission Board building, to be completed next year, "does not contribute to our financial situation," Lewis said. "None of the expenses of the new building are in our budget or our projected budget."

Estimated cost for the new building is \$19.9 million, including \$14.9 million for construction, \$2.6 million for land purchase and development, \$2 million for furnishings and \$400,000 for capital expenditures such as a new telephone system.

The new building will be funded by \$14.5 million from the sale of the current location, \$2.3 million from HMB reserves, \$150,000 from the Southern Baptist Convention capital fund and \$3 million from a fund-raising campaign called "Building for the Future."

On another funding issue, Lewis reiterated his call to continue accepting funds from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The HMB receives about \$500,000 a year through the CBF, Lewis said. Those funds are from churches and individuals, Lewis noted, not the CBF itself.

"To reject these contributions would be perceived as an insult by those donors," Lewis said. "They may not be happy with trends in the SBC or the elected leaders. They may not be happy with the president of the Home Mission Board or the directors of the Home Mission Board, but they still have our missionaries on their heart."

Lewis said he is opposed to the CBF because it is "a schismatic group that has set itself against the convention, its leadership, its boards and its agencies." But not accepting CBF funds would "polarize our convention even more, widening and hardening the division, making the possibility of future reconciliation even more difficult," he said.

The SBC Executive Committee has asked a study committee to make a recommendation on accepting or rejecting CBF funds. Lewis said it would be premature to act on the issue before the recommendation.

Walter Carpenter, lawyer and member of Second Baptist Church of Houston, said the Home Mission Board should not accept CBF funds. "Accepting money from a source that is trying to destroy us is not wise," Carpenter wrote in an article in "Texas Baptist." He referred fellow board members to the article and said the CBF matter should be discussed at a future board meeting, but directors did not debate the issue April 13.

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In other business, board members elected Bob Curtis, pastor of Ballwin Baptist church in Ballwin, Mo., chairman; Wade Armstrong, retired West Virginia pastor, first vice chairman; Marvin Capehart, pastor of First Baptist Church of Alameda, N.M., second vice chairman; Cloma Odom, member of Friendship Mission in Warner Robins, Ga., secretary; and Marti Hefley, member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Hannibal, Mo., assistant secretary.

The board also took a pro-life stand by canceling corporate contracts with Diners Club and American Express credit cards. Both credit card companies are corporate sponsors of Planned Parenthood which advocates abortions. The move was in response to a motion from the SBC annual meeting last year.

Board members created a HMB staff position for an associate director of prayer and spiritual awakening and elected Kerry Skinner to the post. Skinner, a native of Clarksville, Texas, has served on church staffs in Indiana, Kentucky, Texas and Florida.

Also elected to HMB staff positions were Henry Gerald Colbert, Robert Eugene Wilson and Joe Hernandez.

Colbert, church extension director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, will be associate director of field servicing for the new church extension division.

Wilson will serve as associate director of black church extension. He presently is coordinator of black church extension in South Central Los Angeles.

Hernandez, an Illinois native, was elected assistant vice president for strategy development in the church extension section. Hernandez has worked for the Home Mission Board since 1981, when he served as an associate director in language missions.

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SWBTS faculty 'dismayed, offended'  
by trustees' letter to churches By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
4/15/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary expressed "dismay and offense" at the recent letter sent by seminary trustee officers to Southern Baptist churches explaining the firing of President Russell H. Dilday Jr. on March 9.

In an "Open Letter to Southern Baptists," faculty said the trustees' letter implied Dilday "holds liberal views of scripture and uses 'higher criticism' in destructive ways."

"Both charges are false," the faculty letter reads. "We respond not just to defend Dr. Dilday, but also to affirm valid methods of Bible study among Southern Baptists."

However, Ralph W. Pulley Jr., chairman of Southwestern's board of trustees, said the trustees' analysis is accurate as written in their letter. "We respect the right of faculty to express their views, any way they see fit," Pulley said in response to the faculty letter.

However, "we did not accuse Dilday of being a liberal nor did we imply that," Pulley said.

Faculty disputed the trustees' charge that Dilday demonstrates "a commitment to the principles of higher criticism, which spawned theological liberalism (modernism), neo-orthodoxy, the death of God, situational ethics, etc."

The trustee officers' undated letter, sent the last week of March, cited Dilday's 1982 book, "The Doctrine of Biblical Authority."

In chapter 7, pages 95-100 in the book, according to Pulley, Dilday indicates inerrancy has limited value as a designation for the Bible. On page 100, Pulley said, Dilday suggests the use of less emotionally charged words, like dependable, reliable, sufficient and trustworthy.

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Pulley said the faculty letter also quotes only the first part of Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message of 1963. After quoting the phrase "the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man," the faculty letter did not go on to the next sentence, Pulley said, which reads: "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

The "without error" means it is inerrant, Pulley said.

The faculty letter says nothing in Dilday's book raises any question about the author's "conservative views of the scriptures."

Trustees also charged that, "from a decidedly biased position, ... Dilday is dedicated to berate, misrepresent and assail those who hold the Bible to be God's inerrant, infallible and authoritative Word."

Not so, faculty respond in the letter. "In fact, he has repeatedly urged us to avoid such practices. We are dismayed and offended by misrepresentations, distortions, and the use of guilt by association in the letter from the trustee officers."

The faculty letter, signed as "Faculty of SWBTS," also declares "the Bible is the inspired record of God's self-revelation, we affirm its authority. Inspired by God, the Bible was written by men and is a historical and literary document. Christians must remain free to use in a reverent way literary and historical tools of Bible study to understand what God is saying to us through the biblical authors."

The faculty from the three schools of the seminary -- theology, religious education and church music -- have purchased a full-page advertisement of the letter in the Texas Baptist state paper, Baptist Standard, April 20 issue.

According to Lorin Cranford, professor of New Testament, the faculty resolution was initiated by the school of theology April 12 and passed by the faculties of the other two schools April 13. Cranford sent Baptist Press and other news media a copy of the resolution.

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Trustees commend president,  
direction at Golden Gate

By Jim Watters & Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary approved a \$5.5 million budget for 1994-95 and affirmed the vision of President William O. Crews and his continuing contribution to the seminary.

Trustee chairman Rob Zinn of California noted the resolution of support for the seminary and its president was offered at a time when encouraging reports about Southern Baptist agencies deserve a hearing.

"We feel that the positive relationships at this Southern Baptist institution need to be known," Zinn said. "We are supporting our president and his vision and the leadership at this seminary." The resolution reads:

"Whereas Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary was forged in a mission context for the purpose of training Christian leaders committed to reaching the West and the world for Christ, and whereas ministering in today's world demands an even greater commitment to excellence in equipping leaders to serve our Lord effectively, be it resolved that the board of trustees dedicates itself to enhancing Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's ability to fulfill its mission and ministry, and be it further resolved that the board of trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary affirms the seminary's vision and supports the strategic plan for becoming the primary provider of Christian leaders for the churches of tomorrow."

In other action, trustees re-elected Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Highland Park, Calif., to a second term as chairman. Darrell Gabbard, pastor of Dubin (Ohio) Baptist Church, was elected vice chairman, and Kenneth Hall, pastor of First Baptist Church in Carmi, Ill., was elected secretary.

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Trustees unanimously elected Sam Simmons of New York to lead the seminary's southern California campus in Brea. Since 1990, Simmons has been director of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary's northeast branch in Schenectady, N.Y. In addition to his responsibilities as chief administrator and fund-raiser for the center, he has taught missions and practical theology.

"We have come to the strong conclusion that he is the kind of person we'd like to have on our team to lead our work in southern California," Crews told the board.

Simmons begins as director of Golden Gate's Brea campus Aug. 1. At that time, Rick Durst, the campus' current director, becomes vice president for academic affairs at the seminary. Trustees elected Durst to the seminary's top academic post at their fall meeting last year.

"There's just something special happening at this seminary," Simmons told trustees. "I am deeply moved by the vision that's been expressed."

In recognition of a northern California couple's \$1.45 million gift to the church music program last year, the largest single gift received by the seminary to date, the board of trustees unanimously approved naming the music program The Bill and Pat Dixon School of Church Music. A dedication of the school will be scheduled for a later date.

A major renovation of student housing was reported as more than half complete, with an expenditure of about \$1 million, funds on hand from the sale of off-campus housing acquired for temporary use during the early 1980s.

Completed units include both dormitories and most of the two-bedroom apartments. These units are both the oldest units in service and the units of greatest current need. Remaining are 38 single bedroom and studio apartments, some of which are newer units which need only minor repairs. Completion of this project will require additional funds of up to \$750,000, which is anticipated to come from individual gifts to the institution.

An increase in student matriculations fees from \$700 to \$800 per semester was approved for those who are members of Southern Baptist congregations, bringing Golden Gate in line with the increases already made at some other Southern Baptist seminaries. A major increase from \$1,400 to \$2,000 per semester was approved for students who are not members of Southern Baptist churches. Scholarship funds will be sought from non-Southern Baptist sources to continue the ability of the school to offer quality education at affordable costs to students who are other than Southern Baptists.

Other trustee actions included election of Gary Pearson, who has served as associate director of supervised ministry since 1991, to the faculty; the conferral of the title "senior professor" upon Clayton Harrop, retiring vice president of academic affairs for his 39 years of service to Golden Gate, and the same title upon Samuel Y.C. Tang, in recognition of his 17 years of service; approval of a new music degree, master of arts in church music, to be offered upon approval of the National Association of Schools of Music; and approval of the seminary's 1994-95 strategic plan.

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New SBC seminary thrust  
developing in the West By Jim Watters & Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--A new Southern Baptist institution is emerging from a decade of weak enrollment figures and economic gridlock at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, according to observers at the April 11-12 trustee meeting in Mill Valley, Calif.

Trustees for Southern Baptist's only national institution in the western United States heard reports of expansion from every area of the school's operation. Enrollment is up at Golden Gate's main campus in Mill Valley, as well as at its two satellite campuses in Brea, Calif., and Portland, Ore.

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Plans are in the final stages for opening a new teaching center in Phoenix, Ariz., this fall in conjunction with Grand Canyon University. Classes could begin in January 1995, officials said. Centers also are being discussed with Baptist leaders in Denver and Seattle.

"This kind of expansion is based on the philosophy of this institution, rather than the economic rules by which Southern Baptists have traditionally supported and shaped their seminaries," said Jim Stephenson, vice president for financial affairs. "Golden Gate has a commitment for taking quality theological education to the growing centers of mission outreach throughout the American West."

Such institutional growth in these critical mission areas will require finding support from Baptists in those areas, Stephenson explained, since current seminary funding procedures of Cooperative Program gifts are largely designed to encourage the growth of "super campuses."

Cecil Sims, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention and supporter of Golden Gate's new directions, sees other important factors which will positively influence church growth in the West.

"For the past two years Golden Gate has been turning a corner in its attitude toward training leaders for the future," Sims said. "The move has basically been from the traditional 'academic institution' orientation, to becoming a place where practical church leadership can be learned from example and experience. This is the very best kind of academic environment for the theological student who is called to serve in the real world of church growth."

"Golden Gate's trustees have heartily endorsed President (William) Crews' leadership in this refocusing of the seminary's emphasis," Sims said. "It is my conviction, out of a lifetime of service in the mission environment of the Pacific Northwest, that Golden Gate is positioned to do an outstanding job in developing diverse, multi-ethnic, cross-cultural leaders for the 21st century. This exciting challenge deserves the utmost support from Southern Baptists."

Crews said the seminary has come to a point "where we know where we want to go, and we know what we are going to have to do to get there. Now the challenge is to find the resources which will enable what God wants accomplished."

Crews indicated part of the resources for future expansion of Golden Gate will come from fees paid by an expanding student body. However, he added, "The primary resource will undoubtedly come from an increase in endowment support. This increase is happening now and is the natural result of a healthy institution engaged in productive work on its given assignment."

Golden Gate's enrollment for the spring term is 748, reflecting a 10 percent growth at both the main campus in Mill Valley and the southern California campus in Brea, and a 25 percent increase at the Northwest campus in Portland, Ore.

The main campus facilities, including student housing, are at about 85 percent capacity, with recruitment figures indicating full capacity for the fall term. Both the Northwest and the southern California campuses are at maximum capacity until facilities can be expanded. Expansion of facilities at the Mill Valley campus could bring the capacity there to an enrollment of 1,000, with about half as commuting students.

A financial upturn also was reported to the trustees, with a surplus in most operating accounts. Cooperative Program revenue is up 1.7 percent in comparison to last year, and matriculation fee revenue is up 27 percent. Trustees approved a basic budget of \$5,581,400 for 1994-95, a 6 percent increase from last year; a strategic budget of \$5,715,700, designed to replace the basic budget if revenue for the basic budget is exceeded, also was approved.

**Mid-America director to lead  
GGBTS southern California work**

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., unanimously elected J. Sam Simmons Jr. as director of the seminary's southern California campus in Brea.

Simmons will replace Rick Durst, whom trustees elected as the seminary's vice president for academic affairs effective Aug. 1, 1994. At that time, Clayton Harrop, a 39-year faculty member at the seminary who currently holds the seminary's top academic post, retires.

Simmons and his wife, Trish, have been in New York since 1990, where he has been director of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary's northeast branch in Schenectady. Mid-America is an independent seminary based in Memphis, Tenn. In addition to serving as the northeast branch's chief administrator and fund-raiser, he has taught missions and practical theology.

"We have come to a strong conclusion that he is the kind of person we'd like to have on our team to lead our work in southern California," President William O. Crews told trustees.

In response to his election, Simmons said: "There's just something special happening at this seminary. I am deeply moved by the vision that's been expressed."

Following service as business manager at Mid-America Seminary from 1979-82, Simmons was pastor of Hayes Crossing Baptist Mission in Sardis, Miss.; First Baptist Church in Spur, Texas; and Trinity Baptist Church in Memphis.

He earned a bachelor of science from the University of Alabama and a master of divinity and a doctor of theology in missions from Mid-America Seminary.

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**Secularism creeping into church,  
Erickson warns seminarians**

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--These are crucial times in the history of the church, theologian Millard Erickson told Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary students April 6. The evangelical scholar warned the tentacles of secularism have crept into the church, encouraging an "easy believe-ism" that may have also threatened the original audience of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"We are facing a danger that, in trying to reach people, we will try to make it easier for them to come to Christ," said Erickson, research professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the author of numerous theological texts.

"The gospel meets the deepest human need," Erickson said, "but in our desire to reach across the bridge to the other side where the unbelievers are, we must make certain that they come across to Christ."

Erickson warned of reducing the gospel to, "Just become a Christian and you will have everything you want and nothing will be asked of you." The Christian faith was not simply "health, wealth and happiness," and the writer of Hebrews wanted his readers to know that, Erickson said.

"This is serious business; this is a battle; this is a race," he said, acknowledging even the original readers of Hebrews might not have realized the travail their public confessions of Christ would bring them.

Erickson said Hebrews reminds that believers are in for the duration and it is not always going to be easy. "We are engaged in a war with forces of evil, and we must be prepared to respond to them," he said.

Reading from the 12th chapter of Hebrews, Erickson said Christians must lay aside those things which encumber. The epistle writer noted the ability of sin to entangle, said Erickson, remarking sin sticks like Velcro or "like peanut butter on the roof of your mouth."

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Erickson noted just as astronauts boarding a space capsule do not carry on unnecessary items such as tennis rackets and boom boxes, believers also must be wary of things that get in the way of running the race of faith.

"There's nothing inherently evil about boom boxes or tennis rackets," he said, "but they get in the way in that situation. We must lay aside those things that don't contribute to what God has called us to."

The runner must look to the finish line, not to the spectators -- they are distractions, Erickson said. We must look to Jesus, "who has run this course ahead of us," he said, meaning we are not pioneers in this journey of faith.

"It's not, 'Go out there and do the best you can,'" Erickson said. "We must look to Jesus, who completes our faith, who perfects it, who enables us."

We can find comfort in the midst of our weariness and trouble, for Jesus knows exactly what we are feeling every day, said Erickson.

"It is great encouragement," he continued, "to know that our Lord himself is interceding on our behalf. He doesn't just say, 'Go on out there and run, and good luck!'"

In the midst of what are often discouragements, there is the discipline and the perfecting of the faithful believer by the Father. "All the trials, all the pain, all the difficult exams and books to read, and all the committee meetings that sometimes have to be endured, and all the opposition and criticism will fade to insignificance when he says, 'Well done,'" Erickson said.

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Christians need Acts 20:20  
vision, HMB's Lewis says

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press  
4/15/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Christians need a biblical message, a consistent witness and a burden to reach people for Christ, Home Mission Board President Larry L. Lewis said during a commissioning service April 12.

"May God give you Acts 20:20 vision," Lewis said, referring to Paul's explanation for why God had blessed the work of Christians in Ephesus.

Lewis made his remarks at the ceremony in which 59 missionaries were commissioned for service to Canada and 19 states. The commissioning service was held at Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, an African-American congregation in College Park, Ga., a community in metropolitan Atlanta.

In outlining Paul's message, method and manner for mission work, Lewis said the only message that can make a difference is the Bible. "God has not called us to share ideological theories . . . . He has called us to preach the Word.

"I think our world wants to hear, 'Thus saith the Lord,'" he said. "It's the Word of God alone that has the power to change the world, and it's the Word of God alone that has the power to change anybody in it."

Paul's method of ministry was to go from door to door and give a public example of reaching communities with the gospel, Lewis said. "Make soul-winning the priority of your life."

Paul's manner was to have a genuine concern for lost people, Lewis said. "I long to see people with a burden for their community."

"Oh, God, give us tears," he said, recalling when churches had mourners benches. "I don't know if that's the solution, but we need more mourners."

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EDITORS' NOTE: A list of the missionaries commissioned at the service has been posted in the SBCNet Newsroom.



She asked God to use her  
in an incredible way

By Dana Williamson

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--When Erin Thomas prayed God would use her in an incredible way, she had no idea what was in store for her.

Thomas, who served as a journeyman to China, is one of six survivors of what was at the time the worst plane crash in Chinese history.

Speaking to 800 girls at a recent Acteens conference at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Thomas related that when she was in high school a man came to her church and gave a testimony about being robbed, taken to an outhouse, shot in the back of the head and left for dead.

"I prayed that night that God would use me in an incredible way," she recalled.

Just a few years later, Thomas and her teaching partner were returning to China from a holiday at a resort, when the plane they were on was hijacked.

There was a struggle in the cockpit as the plane was touching down. It landed nose first, the front and back of the plane came off, and the middle, where Thomas was seated, landed upside down.

Thomas, who was sporting a broken leg in a cast, said her shoe boot was melted to the floor of the plane, and her collar bone was broken. When she finally freed herself from the boot, she started crawling toward the only light she saw. When that light was covered by smoke, God taught her a lesson in faith, she said.

"God said to me, 'I showed you where to go, and even though you can't see, you need to go in that direction,'" said Thomas, who is now a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

After the crash, which killed 98 people including her teaching partner, Thomas was brought to the United States for skin grafts on her leg that was burned to the muscle, but she returned to China four months later to complete her two years of service.

"Jesus never hid the cost of discipleship," Thomas said. "He never said it would be easy, but it would be worth it.

"We can be common and do the things everyone else does, or we can be different and do what God calls us to do."

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