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HMB's Lewis defends signing
Catholic/evangelical report

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
6/3/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Saying he must have the freedom to "exercise prophetic leadership," Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis defended a document he signed this spring on evangelical and Roman Catholic relationships.

In a 10-page letter to HMB directors, with copies to state Baptist newspaper editors and others, Lewis rejected a call that he publicly withdraw his endorsement of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."

"You must allow your president to exercise prophetic leadership -- freedom to preach what he believes he should preach ... to stand where he feels he should stand on significant issues," he wrote. "If you're a pastor, I imagine you expect that from your church; and I expect that from you."

Lewis also refuted charges the report restricts mission efforts.

A "strong emphasis on missions and world evangelism is interwoven throughout the document," he wrote. "How anyone could read this document and conclude it opposes evangelism and world missions, or even implies such, I can't imagine."

Pointing to the document's supporters, Lewis listed 11 religious leaders who signed the paper. "Why do you suppose such evangelical leaders as Charles Colson and Pat Robertson would sign such a document and rejoice in doing so?"

The paper was not designed to address doctrinal differences between the two groups, Lewis noted, referring to a portion that states some longstanding differences "may never be resolved short of the Kingdom Come."

While the report does not compromise doctrine, Lewis wrote, it gains Catholic recognition of evangelicals as fellow Christians, not members of sects or cults. "This certainly signals a new attitude on the part of the Catholic Church."

Lewis also reviewed the document's condemnation of proselytizing, calling it the "most misreported, misinterpreted and misunderstood" portion.

During their meeting, Catholics charged evangelicals with "sheep stealing," and evangelicals responded the Great Commission mandates to "preach the gospel to every creature," Lewis wrote.

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"This was undoubtedly the one area of greatest tension and most extensive discussion," he wrote. "We clearly stated that our primary thrust is to evangelize the unsaved, regardless of where they may be members and to congregationalize the unchurched, even if they are inactive members of some denomination, even our own."

Lewis' one concession to critics concerns a passage referring to the Catholic doctrine of salvation through the sacrament of baptism.

"It appears those of us who endorsed the document are lending credence to that heresy," he wrote. "Frankly, I simply did not catch this when I reviewed the original draft or I would have insisted on a rewrite. I apologize."

Lewis also mailed the letter to SBC President Ed Young, former SBC presidents, the SBC Inter-Agency Council, Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press.

Of a dozen proposed resolutions received by the SBC Committee on Resolutions, one is on the Catholic/evangelical document, said Mark Coppenger, vice president for convention relations for the SBC Executive Committee and staff representative for the committee on resolutions.

"The committee has not begun to vote on what they will include or exclude" for resolutions recommended to the convention, he said.

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'When we pray, God answers,'
says new FMB prayer director

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
6/3/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Former missionary Randy Sprinkle joined the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff June 1 as director of its international prayer strategy office.

Sprinkle, 44, from Jefferson City, Mo., succeeds Minette Drumwright, who retired March 31. He assumes the missions prayer role after working four years as associate pastor of First Baptist Church in St. Joseph, Mo.

Before that, Sprinkle and his wife, Nancy, of St. Louis, were missionaries for 15 years in southern and eastern Africa. They resigned from mission work in 1990 because of family health problems.

During his missionary career, Sprinkle worked as a vocational teacher in Ethiopia, an airplane pilot and general evangelist in Botswana, and a general evangelist in Lesotho. The Sprinkles established Southern Baptist mission work in Lesotho, a small nation landlocked inside South Africa.

Yet wherever they were, prayer stayed at the center of their ministry, Sprinkle said.

"In the 20 years since we were appointed, prayer has been the heart of our complete mission experience," he explained. "I have that kind of assuring peace now that God was pointing me toward this day, this place and this hour in Southern Baptist life. I'm humbled by the magnitude of the task, but God is big enough for it."

The task includes: helping channel thousands of foreign missions prayer requests to Southern Baptists each month, overseeing the board's toll-free mission PrayerLine (1-800-359-PRAY) and coordinating prayer partnerships between mission fields overseas and state Baptist conventions.

Future prayer partnerships should benefit from Sprinkle's personal experience. In 1987 he worked with Drumwright to link Missouri Baptists and Lesotho in the first prayer partnership between a state Baptist convention and a country.

Before opening work in Lesotho, mission administrators had asked the Sprinkles to consider working in Madagascar. But plans changed when everyone involved sensed God leading the couple to Lesotho.

"If our plans are going one direction and God's plans are going in another direction, our plans need to change," Sprinkle said.

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Sprinkle has written about how God -- and prayer -- worked in his life in a book released in April by New Hope, a publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, and available in Baptist Bookstores. The book, "Until the Stars Appear," looks at the power of prayer in individual lives and details the vital role it played in opening mission work in Lesotho.

"That's the story: when we pray, God answers," explained Sprinkle. "I come back to the Lord's words, 'Apart from me, you can do nothing.' And apart from prayer, you can't know his indwelling presence and power."

Sprinkle received the bachelor of science degree in industrial management from Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, and the master of arts in missiology and master of divinity degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He also received an aircraft mechanic's license from Dakota Aero Tech in Fargo, N.D.

The Sprinkles have two sons, Matthew, age 15, and Stephen, 8.

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed June 3 to state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

**Missionary's X-ray reveals
healing power of prayer**

By Don Martin

Baptist Press
6/3/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--When then-missionary Randy Sprinkle learned he needed back surgery in the late 1980s, he naturally turned to prayer.

"Prayer has been how God works in my life," explained Sprinkle, who became director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's international prayer strategy office June 1, succeeding Minette Drumwright, who recently retired.

In his book recently published by New Hope, "Until the Stars Appear," Sprinkle describes the power of prayer in his life and missionary work, which lasted from 1975 to 1990.

Sprinkle tells how a surgeon in Texas confirmed what X-rays in South Africa had revealed months earlier: a herniated disc in his neck that had to be removed. He relayed this information to the Woman's Missionary Union prayer coordinator in Missouri, Marilyn Coble, who had a prayer network of people standing ready.

But when Sprinkle gave Coble the date of his surgery over the telephone, he sensed more excitement than sympathy. It was the same day as the state's WMU annual meeting, which meant the prayer network would expand to more than 1,000 people.

"I've been working to gather 'pray-ers' for you while God has already done far better than I ever could have," Coble told him. "Something's up."

She was right. On the day of his surgery, Sprinkle was X-rayed again to give the surgeon a more detailed look at the injured disc. But the surgeon could not find a damaged disc.

"Mr. Sprinkle, this is extremely difficult to explain," the surgeon said. "In contrast to your previous X-rays, ... the (X-ray) this afternoon indicates a very different situation from the one you previously exhibited. We were going to remove a herniated disc that was causing you problems. Now, though, it's a perfectly normal, healthy disc."

The hospital released Sprinkle the next day after a night of observation.

"Clearly and unmistakably, God had intervened and healed the damaged disc in my neck. And although I wasn't completely returned to my former health, I felt better already," he said.

That day Coble relayed the news of Sprinkle's recovery to the Missouri WMU state assembly.

"There were few dry eyes as she related what God had done for us in answer to their prayers," Sprinkle writes.

That's just one of the many examples of prayer's power in Sprinkle's book.

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"Randy brings the reader to a reaffirmation of God's power, love and faithfulness to his promises and his praying people," writes Drumwright on the book's back cover. "I recommend it to every missions pray-er."

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Pope expresses disagreement
to Clinton on abortion policies By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
6/3/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pope John Paul II reiterated his opposition to the Clinton administration's abortion policies in a June 2 meeting with the president of the United States.

The pope pressed Clinton not "to be insensitive to the value of life or appear to be advocating policies that would undermine the strength of the family," the president said after the meeting at the Vatican, according to The Washington Post.

The president and the pope have a "different view" on abortion policy, White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said repeatedly after the meeting, according to The Washington Times. Their differences are irreconcilable, she said, according to The Post.

A Vatican spokesman said there would be no closing of the gap between the two men unless Clinton altered his position, according to news reports.

In addition to reversing the pro-life policies of the two previous administrations, the Clinton White House has called for liberalization of abortion laws in foreign countries. In March, the State Department directed its diplomats to lobby governments for support of a new United States policy endorsing abortion as a "fundamental right of all women." The action came in preparation for a United Nations conference on population control set in September at Cairo, Egypt.

In a session with American seminarians studying at the Vatican, Clinton said of the meeting, "We talked about the upcoming conference in Cairo on world population problems, about where we agreed and where we didn't and how we could come together on a policy that would promote responsible growth of the world's population and still reaffirm our common commitment for the central role of the family in every society."

The pope did not appear with Clinton at his session with the seminarians.

He does not support abortion as a method of birth control, but his administration does endorse "active and aggressive family planning efforts; we do have differences over contraception," Clinton said, according to news reports.

Raymond Flynn, United States ambassador to the Vatican, had warned Clinton the pope was angry about his administration's position on the Cairo conference and planned to discuss it with the president, The Post reported.

The Clinton White House also has lobbied for the introduction of RU-486, the French abortion pill, into the United States.

The president reported the pope and he discussed world affairs, including the situation in Bosnia. He pledged to the pope especially to support the "cause of religious freedom" in Asia, Clinton said.

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For now, Land isn't signing
environmental declaration By Darrell Turner

Baptist Press
6/3/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Richard Land isn't afraid to sign controversial statements, as shown by his endorsement of a joint declaration of evangelicals and Roman Catholics issued in March.

And the executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission also has supported joint initiatives on environmental concerns, such as an interfaith statement issued in May 1992 in Washington.

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But Land has not joined the more than 200 signers of "An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation," which was made public in March. And he says he isn't planning to, despite the fact he was invited to the discussion that led to its drafting last fall by a group assembled by Evangelicals for Social Action and World Vision.

"Before I sign on to a document, I want to look at all the possible concerns and the concerns that Southern Baptists might have," Land said, adding there are some in the evangelical declaration that "have given me cause for pause."

One of Land's chief concerns is a paragraph that refers to "degradations of creation" and warns "many of these degradations are signs that we are pressing against the finite limits God has set for creation. With continued population growth, these degradations will become more severe."

Land said the Christian Life Commission has "been instructed by our trustee board to do nothing which would be construed as arguing for population limitation and birth control as a means of limiting overpopulation of the Earth." He said he believes the population growth comment in the declaration "comes perilously close to violating that guideline."

Another concern Land cited was a statement toward the end of the declaration calling on Christians "to listen to and work with all those who are concerned about the healing of creation, with an eagerness both to learn from them and also to share with them our conviction that the God whom all people sense in creation (Acts 17:27) is known fully only in the Word made flesh in Christ the living God who made and sustains all things."

The CLC head said while he had no objections to sharing with non-Christians, "learning from New Agers is not something I'm willing to endorse. Learning from pantheists is not something I'm willing to endorse."

Land said he had planned to take part in the drafting discussion last fall but when the meeting was postponed one day he was unable to attend because of a prior commitment. He said he would be "delighted" to take part in the ongoing discussions the newly formed Evangelical Environmental Network is encouraging as part of a process that may result in a revision of the declaration.

Cliff Benzel, director of the EEN in Wynnewood, Pa., said the drafters were "very disappointed" Land did not sign on because "Southern Baptists represent a very large part of our evangelical constituency." Benzel, a minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said the group hopes Land will take part in the ongoing dialogue because "he is an important voice in the broader evangelical community, and we want to have his input as we develop this whole program."

Apart from Land's stance on the recent environmental declaration, CLC work on environmental concerns has included devoting its 1991 conference to the issue, which resulted in a book Land and CLC associate Louis Moore edited, "The Earth Is the Lord's." The CLC also offers a number of environmental-related materials in the ethics resources it provides to Southern Baptist churches.

One Southern Baptist who said he has no problem with the statement is Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville. Parham, a former associate director of the CLC, said he found the evangelical declaration to be "surprisingly Christocentric and profoundly biblical" and was surprised Land declined to endorse it.

Speaking to Land's concern about the population growth reference, Parham said, "It is my perspective that the biblical mandate to multiply has been fulfilled. If the rate of population growth continues, human life will become even more impoverished in the southern hemisphere and will be diminished in the northern hemisphere."

In this respect, he stressed those in the northern hemisphere also bear some responsibility, since "our rate of consumption probably does more to endanger the Earth than the rate of overpopulation in the poorest countries in the world."

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Turner is a free-lance writer in Fort Wayne, Ind.

**Southern receives alumni gifts
totaling more than \$500,000**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary recently has received two of its largest alumni gifts ever, totaling more than \$500,000.

Len E. Weston of Manassas Va., and Thomas Jack Tichenor of West Chester, Ohio, contributed \$300,000 and \$212,000, respectively, to the Louisville, Ky., school. Both gifts came in the form of irrevocable trusts.

Weston and Tichenor each said their gifts were motivated by gratitude for the seminary. "I had a marvelous experience at Southern," said Weston, a 1938 graduate. He said he vowed during his student days that, if able, he would someday help the seminary financially.

Tichenor, a 1942 graduate, also has fond memories of his student days. However, the Taylorsville, Ky., native's experience with the seminary goes back to his boyhood. His pastors were always Southern students. One of the student pastors would sometimes invite young Tichenor to attend seminary classes.

"We were close to the seminary and could pretty well feel the pulse of the seminary," he said.

"We are extremely thankful for the confidence that these two alumni have placed in the future of Southern Seminary," said Thomas F. Mabe, vice president for institutional advancement at Southern. "Their gifts will help assure that the tradition of excellence experienced by these two graduates will continue."

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**Southeastern broadens public
relations, marketing efforts**

Baptist Press
6/3/94

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--In order to broaden its public relations and marketing efforts, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is shifting duties among members of its external affairs division.

Public relations director Paul Brock will now specialize in the area of graphic layout and design for the seminary's many publications and brochures. His new title will be publications director.

The new position of news and information director will be assumed by external affairs officer Greg Kingry. Kingry, who is completing a divinity degree at Southeastern, is a native of Atlanta, and former owner of a printing business as well as an audiovisual company in north Georgia.

Assisting Kingry in this transition will be news coordinator Jon Walker, who leaves July 1 to become an editorial associate with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

Southeastern's vice president for external affairs Bart Neal said these changes will allow the seminary to expand its news and information capacity while still maintaining a high degree of quality in the area of publications.

"One of our goals is to expand our ability to market the excellent educational opportunities at Southeastern," Neal said, "We feel Paul Brock's experience in design, and Greg Kingry's business background will combine to make an excellent marketing team for the seminary."

These changes became official June 1.

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**Generational groups think,
live, react differently**

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/3/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--AT 70, Joe Singleton has been church treasurer for 20 years. When Joe gives a financial report, people listen. When he says the church has money problems, they believe him.

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Margaret, on the other hand, asks the probing "why" questions in Sunday school or church business meetings. She can be counted on to speak up or even volunteer to help with activities related to her children.

Ellen is piloting a new kind of Sunday night study group in the church -- intergenerational -- that includes participants from 7 to 70. Her own daughter and grandson are part of the group.

Shaun comes to church when something interests him. He plays on the softball team. He contributed his time to help the church explore the kind of computer system it needed. The project was completed in record time.

Joe is a member of the GI generation (born 1901-1925), while Margaret is part of the post-World War II Boomer generation (1945-62). Ellen comes from the so-called Silent generation (1926-44), and Shaun is part of the generation variously called Busters, 13th generation or Generation X, (1963-81).

A pastor of these four fictional persons could better perceive their interest and needs as well as their differences if he understood the concept of generational segmentation, an author and a Baptist Sunday School Board leader agreed.

Neal Howe, co-author of *Generations: The History of America's Future*, led a May 31 training seminar at the BSSB for persons involved in utilizing generational principles in literature they produce.

"In a lot of churches, the GI generation manages the finances," he said. "We trust GIs as stewards of material wealth. Boomers want dominion over values. The church must harness the values fixation of boomers." In contrast, the leaders of the 13th generation are "practical and pragmatic. They get things done."

Understanding generations helps people "look at how the past shapes the future," Howe said.

Louis Hanks, director of the youth-adult department of the BSSB's Bible teaching-reaching division, said his department is utilizing generational segmentation in Sunday school literature improvements to be introduced in the Life and Work Series for the two age groups in October. He emphasized the concept of generational understanding is biblical.

For example, at the burning bush, God told Moses he was the God of multiple generations -- of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Hanks said.

With five generational groups present in most churches today -- including the Millennials (children 11 and under) -- Hanks said understanding the differences of generational groups is a "great tool to help pastors understand where people are coming from. It can be a tool for enhancing communication among generations."

In youth and adult Life and Work materials for 1994-95, participants will study the same Bible passages, but teachers will have lesson plans targeted to their generational grouping. Periodicals will have different titles, appearances, different lesson titles and teaching aims. Lesson materials are written for the age group.

The result for Bible study classes will be lessons that are more relevant to the needs of the participants, Hanks predicted.

Resource kits and periodicals for members and teachers of young adults 18-34, the 13th generation, will be titled "Directions." "Pursuits" is the title for Boomers, middle-aged adults 35-54, while adults 55-69, Silent Generation, will study "Ventures." "Pathways" is the title of the periodicals for adults 70-up, members of the GI generation.

"Our intent is a strategic focus on reaching people -- especially secular people -- in these major target groups," Hanks said. "To reach them we have to understand them. Understanding generational distinctives is the best way to understand their needs."

He acknowledged many churches will have adult Sunday school age grading that will be somewhat different from the age groupings of the periodicals. Leaders should choose periodicals based on the ages of the majority of class members, he said.

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Using generational segmentation, Hanks said the Bible teaching-reaching division will be better able to "create a menu of unique ministries, Bible study resources and services specifically customized to meet the needs of these market segments."

"This also will influence youth and adult ministry designs as well," Hanks said. For example, specific strategies for reaching a particular generation can be developed.

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Past shapes future
through generations

Baptist Press
6/3/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Understanding generational differences helps people "look at how the past shapes the future," according to Neal Howe, co-author of *Generations: The History of America's Future*.

Howe, who led a May 31 training seminar at the Baptist Sunday School Board, said understanding how current generational groupings will age is critical to understanding the future.

The Silent Generation (50-68 years old), for example, "will be sensitive, other-directed elders," he said. Financially well off, they will bring about a renewed emphasis on the extended family as they share activities with their children and grandchildren. They won't like the term "senior citizen" and will be less involved in lobbying for their interests than GIs.

Boomers (32-49 years old), will in their later years be less interested in material things and emphasize a return to the simple life, predicted Howe, himself a Boomer. They will trade material reward for moral authority, seek cerebral and enduring values but could "introduce a new meanness into politics."

While the 13th generation (13-31 years old) currently has a major public relations problem because of how they are perceived by other generations, Howe predicted they will emerge as the "most perceptive of all current living generations. Once they see what needs to be done, they will just do it."

As the Millennials (birth to 12 years) move into adulthood, their motto will be "Just Do It Together," Howe said, in that their generation has included a continuous focus on cooperation and teamwork.

Describing Millennials as "America's next great cadre of heroes," Howe said they will follow patterns similar to the GI generation.

He said "some generations are more aware of what they have in common, especially those who came of age in major turning points." Among current generations, GIs and Boomers are more conscious of themselves as groupings.

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End-time confusion stumbles
many Baptists, theologians say By Jon Walker

Baptist Press
6/3/94

NASHVILLE (BP)--Many Baptist preachers have done a poor job explaining eschatological issues to their congregations, leaving their people open to radical interpretations of the Scriptures, according to three theologians interviewed for the June/July issue of *SBC Life*.

Millard Erickson, David Dockery and Paige Patterson took part in a roundtable discussion on eschatology as part of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee magazine's "Forum," a monthly section to explore issues important to Southern Baptists.

"I think a lot of us have tended to avoid (eschatology) because (those using end-time charts) were the people who talked about it all the time," said Millard Erickson, author of "Contemporary Options in Eschatology" and research professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

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"If (an eschatological discussion is) going to cause controversy at all, or even little disagreements, it's easier to stay away from it. But I think that neglect of it has allowed the people with extremely detailed views to co-opt the whole area," Erickson added.

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., said: "My guess would be that when the majority of Southern Baptists hear the mention of millennialism or eschatology, their first question is, 'Well, does the person get well? The vast majority of Southern Baptists really don't have much of a clue about what is being discussed.'"

A popular speaker on the subject of eschatology, Patterson added, "My guess is that among the pastors, you probably have a sizeable number of them who don't know a lot more about it."

Yet, understanding eschatological issues such as whether there will be a millennium are important because it gives "a framework by which you can interpret life and history," said David Dockery, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "It also gives you a hope for living, knowing that God is in control and is moving history along to a providential destiny."

Although all three theologians hold pre-millennial views, the difference of opinion among them reflects the complexity of eschatological thought within the Southern Baptist Convention. Dockery said he is a "thoroughgoing pre-millennialist but rather agnostic on the timing of the Rapture." Erickson is a historical pre-millennialist and "non-dispensational, not anti-dispensational. And there's a considerable difference." Patterson identifies himself as a pre-tribulation, pre-millennialist, yet one who is uncomfortable with classical dispensationalism.

"One of the reasons we have to preach (eschatology) is to rescue it from the radicals," Patterson said. "I feel I can say that, because most of the people who get carried away with (radical eschatological preaching) tend to be dispensational pre-millennialists."

Patterson said he became concerned about this issue when the book "88 Reasons Why Jesus is Coming Again in '88" was published. "What concerned me was that I began to receive numerous calls from Southern Baptist pastors asking whether there was anything to this?" Patterson said. "At that point, I became very much concerned, and I recognized that we have so avoided the difficult passages of apocalyptic import, of eschatological significance, that our people are very vulnerable to any kind of thing that comes along like that."

Patterson added: "For one thing, we're not really equipping our people if they don't know some ... other views are out there, and (those views) do have plausibility. So I preach what I preach very vibrantly, but I also try to say to people as I preach it, 'This is not the only perspective on this.' But the certainty of the return of Christ and our gathering unto him is unconditional."

Erickson noted one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament addresses the issue of Jesus' second coming. "I don't think it's so much that you have all your 'I's' dotted and 'T's' crossed, that you can fill out one of these charts as to how everything is going to happen. But you can create within people an expectation, a desire to live life in anticipation of Christ's return. That shapes (lives) differently. It give it a certain hope, a certain expectation."

"The gospel writers, quoting Jesus, say that brings a certain carefulness to life," Erickson said. "Paul uses it in Romans 9-11 as a motivation for evangelism. Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 1, uses it as a motivation for ethical living and John, in 1 John chapter 3, says that it is hope that transforms us from within."

Focusing upon the details of the end-times can lead to a "Christ-less eschatology," Dockery said. "People become more concerned about current events, the nation of Israel, these kinds of things, rather than focusing their attention on the return of Christ, which has to remain central to this entire question."

Pre- and a-millennial views
vary among Southern Baptists

By Jon Walker

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The eschatological views of Southern Baptists have changed significantly over the last 50 years, according to David Dockery, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky..

Dockery, along with theologians Paige Patterson and Millard Erickson, participated in a roundtable discussion on eschatology in the June/July issue of SBC Life, published by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. The discussion appeared in the magazine's "Forum," a monthly section exploring issues important to Southern Baptists.

"Although a-millennialism has been dominant in the colleges and seminaries, pre-millennialism has gained ascendancy in the pulpits," Dockery said. "R.G. Lee and (W.A.) Criswell were the two dominant pre-millennial pulpits. They've shaped the denomination so that I would say the majority of Southern Baptist pulpits today are pre-millennial."

However, W.T. Conner and E.Y. Mullins "were a-millennialists and that became the dominant position in Southern Baptist academia during the 20th century," Dockery said.

Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., added Ray Summers popularized a-millennialism with his book, "Worthy is the Lamb." "It became extraordinarily popular and remains so today," Patterson said. "You walk into a pastor's library, and the chances are the book will be on the shelf."

Patterson admitted he was influenced by Summers' book, but then he "experienced a conversion of millennial views, based on reading the Scripture. ... I grappled with the Old Testament prophecies, such as Ezekiel 40-48, and the Isaiahic prophecies concerning the kingdom age. I came to a point where I had to say they were looking for a real kingdom age on earth. I could find nothing in the New Testament that negated that."

He went on to tell an anecdote about the shifting millennial views at First Baptist Church in Dallas: "George W. Truett ... was probably closer to post-millennialism. After Truett's death, (the church) called W.A. Criswell, who was a pre-millennialist. When (the church) wrote the statement of faith for the church, Dr. Criswell wrote it pre-millennially. One of the deacons stood up and protested the adoption of the statement, saying that Truett could not sign it. Upon this, Dr. Criswell rose and said, 'That, brother, is absolutely correct. When Dr. Truett, the far-famed pastor of this illustrious congregation, was here, he could not have signed this. But he can now.'"

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

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