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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

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Materialism called top threat
to Christianity in today's world By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Materialism -- favoring choices over absolutes and assuming all problems can be solved with science and the human mind -- represents the greatest threat to Christianity in today's world, a conference leader told participants in a session during "Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival" Aug. 1 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

In a conference on issues and forces affecting global missions, Jimmy Maroney, director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's global desk, emphasized some results of materialism such as medications that save lives are good.

However, "this whole umbrella of materialism -- modernity, secularization and plurality -- is insidious," he said. "Your views on materialism dictate your lifestyle and behavior.

"We cannot pray for lost people all over the world and still maintain the lifestyle we have," Maroney said.

David Watson, a worker with Southern Baptists' Cooperative Services International in Singapore, challenged conference participants to evaluate their own lifestyles.

"When things become more important than people, you are a materialist and you worship at that altar," he said.

For example, Watson said if a person involved in a car accident thinks first of the damage to the car rather than the condition of the person in the other vehicle, he is a materialist.

Maroney noted no Scripture is available in 4,500 of the 15,000 languages of the world.

"Basically the reason there are 4,500 languages without Scripture is because of our disobedience," Maroney said. "We have not carried out the Great Commission" to take the gospel to the entire world.

Maroney said two other forces, Islam and mega-poverty, are growing in the world while a third, totalitarianism, is not as strong as 25 years ago.

The "simplistic nature" of the Islamic religion makes it particularly attractive, said Maroney, noting it presently has 935 million adherents worldwide. That figure is expected to top 1.2 billion by the year 2000.

"Wherever legalism flourishes, th Islamic religion can grow to an unbelievable strength," Maroney said. He noted Islam is experiencing growth in the prisons of the United States.

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On the other hand, he said, "where there is freedom in Christ, the chance of the Islamic religion flourishing is diminished."

Regarding poverty, he said 46 percent of the world's population are needy or destitute. Another 10 percent are just getting by. At the other end of the spectrum, 9 percent are wealthy and 35 percent are comfortably well off.

Among Christians today, 1 billion worldwide are poor and 715 million of them live in cities.

In addition to the forces of materialism, mega-poverty, Islam and totalitarianism, Maroney said missionaries minister in a world increasingly influenced by transnational corporations which often have more power than national governments.

Also, many of the 7,000 world cities with populations in excess of 100,000 have more power than the countries in which they are located.

Nations are diminishing in influence while people groups with a common language and culture are growing, Maroney said. He predicted that wars of the future will more likely be between people groups than between nations.

He predicted more culture wars are likely to break out as people in a secular society make different choices about important issues and maintain little tolerance for those with other viewpoints.

Maroney emphasized the world "is not the way it used to be. It is complicated and it is going to get more that way."

He predicted the possible evolution of a "more radical Christianity" that is more obviously different from the values of a secular world. "When it is recognized as different from society, evangelism will do better than ever before.

"When you lift the uniqueness of Christ, you will lose some but some will find it as the answer to the confusion of their soul," Maroney said.

Approximately 1,400 people attended Jericho which was sponsored by the Home and Foreign Mission boards, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood Commission.

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Tentmaking makes comeback
among Southern Baptists

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--A form of mission service that goes back to the Apostle Paul is making a comeback among Southern Baptists, according to Carl Barrington.

Tentmaking -- where a person practices a trade or profession to generate income to enable him or her to carry out ministry -- gained its name from Paul who sometimes worked as a tentmaker while also preaching, teaching and evangelizing.

Barrington, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Mission Service Corps, said "the tentmaker has been the norm rather than the exception" in Christian history. He led a conference on tentmaking during "Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival" July 30-Aug.5 at Glorieta (N.M) Baptist Conference Center.

Among Southern Baptists, more than 50 percent of pastors were tentmakers from the denomination's beginning in 1845 to 1948, Barrington said. From 1948 to the 1970s, the trend of churches providing full financial support for their pastors increased to about 70 percent. However, since the 1970s, the percentage of churches providing full support has decreased.

Today, he said, the need for tentmaking pastors, church staff members, campus ministers, catalytic missionaries and other types of ministers is greater than ever before, especially in areas where Southern Baptists are few in number.

"Where the needs are greatest, the resources are lowest," Barrington said.

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In denominational terms, a tentmaker is defined as one who spends at least 20 hours a week in ministry and who receives less than full financial support for those efforts. Many Southern Baptist tentmakers receive no financial support and support themselves at vocations as diverse as corporate vice president, nurse, teacher, plumbing contractor, tour company operator, motel manager and auto mechanic.

Among the 1,900 people currently serving in the Mission Service Corps where persons commit to at least two years of service, Barrington said 36 percent are retired people living on pensions and other income, 33 percent raise their own financial support and 31 percent are tentmakers.

"The call of God and proper, adequate service to him has nothing to do with who signs your paycheck," said Barrington.

He said a model of ministry that began in the 1950s suggests a church is started by calling a full-time pastor, purchasing or building a facility where the church can meet and providing other materials and equipment. The cost to implement that model at a modest level would be approximately \$285,000.

On the other hand, an emerging model results in a church start with a tentmaker generating his total income from his trade or profession, renting a facility to meet in and providing basic materials and equipment at a cost of as little as \$15,000.

"There are not going to be enough finances to start all the churches we need to start" using the 1950s model, Barrington said, noting it is still viable in some areas.

The increased availability of trained ministers also points to the reality that more will have to be tentmakers, he said.

In the 1950s, 0.9 seminary graduates were available for every full-time, salaried ministry position while today the figure has increased to 2.6 available for each full-time, salaried position.

"We need to put more emphasis on equipping the tentmaker to do the ministry he or she was called to do," Barrington said.

People interested in tentmaking should fill out a Mission Service Corps application available from the Home Mission Board, he said. Also, they should talk with people in their ministry field or geographical area of interest to learn of opportunities for service and consider attending one of about 20 MSC orientation sessions held each year.

People who are interested may call the HMB at 1-800-HMB-VOLS.

"Our dream and vision is to make the idea of tentmaking more widely known among Southern Baptists," Barrington said.

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She voices thanks for prayers
that gave her peace, healing

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--On Aug. 1, 1993, participants in the Jericho missions conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center were called to prayer for Jan Johnsonius, a missionary to Argentina who had been critically injured in the car accident in which her husband, Jim, had been killed.

One year later, Johnsonius told those attending Jericho 1994 her ability to stand before them was a direct result of the grace of God and the power of prayer.

Johnsonius, who suffered 13 fractures, a bruised liver and a punctured lung in the accident, had been transported from a village clinic to the intensive care unit of a Buenos Aires hospital when Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin led Glorieta conferees in a prayer for her recovery. He also urged them to continue to pray for her in the days ahead.

"I really believe those prayers were instrumental in my injuries not being any more serious than they were," said Johnsonius, who spent more than two months learning how to walk again. "I could feel the power of God's healing in my body."

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Now recovered from her injuries and continuing her journey of grief recovery, Johnsonius is on furlough from mission service in Argentina, living in Richmond, Va., and working on special assignment as a writer with the Foreign Mission Board.

Although she did not know until several months later of the prayers on her behalf at Glorieta, Johnsonius knew immediately she felt an indescribable peace and tranquility despite great physical pain and grief at the loss of her husband.

What she did not know was, the peace she experienced was visible to the doctor who cared for her at the village clinic. He was with her when she learned her husband had died.

"Do you believe in God?" Johnsonius asked the doctor through her own pain.

"No," he responded.

"After what you've seen here tonight, are you beginning to believe there's a god?" she asked?

"Yes," he replied.

Three months later, Johnsonius returned to that village hospital and talked three hours with the doctor about God.

"I know I had that opportunity because you were praying for me," she said.

The doctor has not yet accepted Christ as his personal Savior because "faith is a difficult concept for him," Johnsonius said. She prays he will at some point become a Christian and urges others to pray for him as well.

Prayers offered on her behalf when her husband's name appeared on the missionary prayer calendar on Sept. 29, 1993, also impacted Johnsonius in a dramatic way.

Alone in her apartment on the night of Sept. 28, she still was unable to put any weight on her left leg and walked with the aid of crutches.

Feeling again the healing sensation she had experienced in the Buenos Aires hospital, she wondered if she could walk unaided. She laid aside the crutches and took a few faltering steps.

At first unable to account for the unique feeling of God's healing presence, "I realized in parts of the world it already was the next morning," Johnsonius said.

"It occurred to me that was why this was happening. It brought home to me how powerful the prayers of people are for missionaries on their birthdays."

She also felt the power of prayer in other ways.

"I think people prayed specifically for me about my grief," she said.

And, spending six weeks in an ankle-to-hip cast, Johnsonius never experienced the itching sensation common to broken bones healing in casts.

"I bet some little kid out there who's had a broken arm or leg prayed for me," she said with a smile.

Johnsonius had dreaded the first anniversary of her husband's death. She was invited by FMB official Don Reavis to go to Glorieta as a witness of "how effective fervent prayer can be."

"It's been a blessing to me to be here on the anniversary of the accident," she said. "I consider it a gift from God. I know people are praying for me this week."

Jericho is sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Home and Foreign Mission boards, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union.

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An article by Johnsonius on her grief process following the death of her husband, along with other articles on the subject of grief, will be released in a few weeks by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

SBC Calvinists affirm
missions and evangelism

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Calvinism and evangelism are not mutually exclusive, according to David Miller, former director of missions for the Little Red River Baptist Association in Arkansas.

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"I'm about ready to dispel the myth and the lie that preaching the truth of the doctrines of grace will hurt evangelism and missions," Miller told a group attending the 12th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference at Samford University July 26-29.

The "doctrines of grace" -- as they are called by Miller and many of his fellow Calvinists -- include such ideas as election, predestination, the sovereignty of God and the inability of man to exercise faith unless God first regenerates him.

Miller told conferees that an Arkansas pastor recently told him, "I preach the doctrines of grace because it is a tremendous motivation for me personally and for our church to go out into the highways and the hedges and witness the gospel to lost souls."

"We can go out with confidence," Miller continued recounting the pastor's words, "that God has chosen some and -- if we preach the gospel to enough of them -- God's going to save some of them. On a regular basis, our people come with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them."

Pastors ought to preach the doctrines of grace because they are biblical and "because therein is the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Miller, who was a director of missions 35 years and now is an itinerant preacher and president of Line Upon Line Ministries.

The "Founders Conference" is so named because many early Southern Baptist leaders of the 19th century were Calvinists, according to conference leaders.

It originated in 1982 when seven men met for prayer in a motel room in Euless, Texas, said Tom Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Fla.

"The question that we had on our minds (was), Is there anything that we can do to encourage or try to facilitate the fellowship of men who are coming to learn the doctrines of grace as they are given to us in the Scripture," said Ascol, "and as they were held by our early Southern Baptist forefathers? If we should do something, what should that be?"

The result was the establishment of an annual conference, Ascol said, where speakers would address "the doctrines of grace and their experimental application to the local church, particularly in the areas of worship and witness."

"We are not hyper-Calvinists," Ascol told the group in his welcoming address to the conference. "We do believe in the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation and unless God sovereignly acts, no one will be saved.

"We also believe equally strongly in the absolute responsibility of men to repent and believe the gospel, whether or not they are able to do so," said Ascol, who is a member of the planning committee for the annual conference.

For newcomers, Ascol emphasized the Founders Conference is not an organization to be joined. "Regularly, I am asked what it takes to become a member," said Ascol. "There is no membership list."

Rather the conference simply meets to advocate the doctrines of grace through speakers and the distribution of literature, said Ascol, who is editor of the conference's quarterly publication, The Founders Journal.

In 1995, Ascol and other conference leaders plan to mail 50,000-60,000 copies of a special "sesquicentennial issue" of the journal to Southern Baptist churches. The mailing is designed to coincide with the 150th anniversary celebration of the SBC's founding in 1845.

"It's a wonderful project," Ascol said, "where each of the articles have been written with the sole purpose in mind of calling our denomination to re-examine and reconsider the biblical foundations from which we have come, to consider our history and our heritage, our theology and to be confronted with the truths that our forefathers loved so dearly."

Ascol said the Founders Conference is not a political organization. "We don't have any kind of political agenda within the Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "I would dare say that the overwhelming majority would be thankful to God for the conservative resurgence that we have seen take place in our denomination over the last many years. ...

"Our hopes and our aims go far beyond anything that an electoral process of a convention can accomplish," said Ascol. "The things that we truly long for -- the renewal that we pray for and are laboring for -- cannot be voted in by the majority. It must be sent down by the Sovereign. ...

"It is very clear to us that if we truly long to see revival -- and we do -- then we must work for reformation. We must try to have the old truth of the Scripture recovered -- that which has been largely eclipsed in our modern Christian world," Ascol said.

Ascol criticized some Calvinists who would use the doctrines of grace to oppose missions and evangelism. "We renounce hyper-Calvinism as deadly, pernicious error," he said. "We strongly and boldly encourage one another to be zealous in spreading the gospel to all people everywhere."

Another conference speaker linked belief in the truth of the Bible with belief in the doctrines of grace.

"If you convince people of the truthfulness of God's Word, then the doctrines of grace won't be a problem, because they're right here in the Word of God," said Hal Wynn, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in North Fort Myers, Fla.

"Once people accept the authority and the truthfulness of the Word of God ... then they'll come to see (the doctrines of grace) as they are -- indeed the truth of God," Wynn said.

Wynn warned the conferees that they run the risk of theological loneliness if they are faithful in preaching the doctrines of grace.

"You may be alone in your association. You may be the only church that is preaching the gospel and the doctrines of grace," he said. "People may be suspicious of you because of the truth you hold to. You might be the only one in your church. That would be sad, but it might be that there aren't very many in your church who understand the doctrines of grace."

Bill Ascol, the current and founding pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., and brother of Tom Ascol, said a belief in the doctrines of grace is consistent with a wholesome doctrine of the Trinity.

"The only other picture is this -- that we hear so often in so-called evangelical circles -- that God the Father wants to save everybody. Jesus Christ came and died to save everybody. The Holy Spirit's doing his best, but he can't get everybody saved. That is cacophony. That is not Trinity. That doesn't exalt the Triune God. It looks more like the Keystone Cops," said Bill Ascol.

"Either you have in the blessed holy Trinity symphony and harmony or you have cacophony," or dissonance, he said. "God the Father set his heart upon a people in eternity past -- purposing to save them, loving them with an everlasting love. Jesus Christ in time came to die for those people to accomplish redemption for them. And in time the Holy Spirit applies redemption -- purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son -- to the very hearts and lives of those ... for whom the Son died on the Cross."

Plans were announced for the Southern Baptist Founders Conference Southwest, which will be held Oct. 10-12 at First Baptist Church at Roosevelt in Lubbock, Texas.

The meeting will feature several speakers, including Tom Ascol; Tom Nettles, a Southern Baptist who is associate professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill.; Fred Malone, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Clinton, La.; and Robert B. Selph, pastor of Miller Valley Baptist Church in Prescott, Ariz.

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Founders speakers challenge
church growth 'pragmatism'

By Keith Hinson

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The church growth movement often elevates pragmatism above biblical principles, according to speakers at the 12th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference at Samford University July 26-29.

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"Today we're being challenged by pragmatism," said Hal Wynn, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in North Fort Myers, Fla., speaking to a group consisting mostly of Southern Baptist ministers who identify themselves as Calvinists.

"For Southern Baptist life today, it seems that pragmatism has become another authority for us. The question isn't, 'Is it right?'; it is 'Does it work?' -- and if it works, then that's good. So we find this beginning to infect our thinking in our churches," Wynn said.

Walter Chantry, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pa., said the church growth movement uses methods that assume the Bible alone is not sufficient to attract people.

Speaking of ideas held by many American Christians today, Chantry said, "You do not expect the world to be attracted to Christ by the Bible and by disciplined teaching of the Scriptures and Bible memory ... and sermons on the Bible in church. You do not expect that young people, teen-agers especially, would be attracted to that.

"But if we use puppets and clowns, they will come. If we use rock music, they will be attracted. If we have contests in which we give out glittering prizes to the children, they will believe. If we dress up the preacher in costumes, if we have drama and lead living animals through the church, they will believe. If we get superstars to give their testimonies, we'll fill the church and they will believe. Anything to supplant the Bible, anything -- just not the Bible alone.

"(But) the Bible is sufficient," Chantry concluded.

Don Whitney, pastor of Glenfield Baptist Church in Glen Ellyn, Ill., listed five concerns he has about the church growth movement:

1. Seeker terminology. Noting the church growth movement often uses terms like "seeker-sensitive" and "seeker services," Whitney referred the audience to Romans 3:11: "There is none who understand, there is none who seeks for God."

Whitney said seeker terminology assumes "the world is filled with people who are seeking for God, and they are seeking for truth, and if we would just find innovative ways to get them into the building and innovative ways to communicate the gospel, we will see great numbers of people reached."

"But the Bible says that no one is seeking for ... the God of the Bible, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. ... They're seeking for a god cafeteria-style -- like the god of love or like the god of mercy and so forth. And they often use terms like this, 'Well, my god wouldn't send anyone to hell.' ...

"They're not looking for a God who is holy, not looking for a God who is inflexibly just. ... If great numbers of people were truly seeking for God, we would see a lot more unbelievers coming to our church services," Whitney said.

2. The use of drama. Whitney referred to comments by one large church's drama director, who said, "A lot of people question or criticize our use of drama, and a lot of people feel as though they need to find a biblical basis for using drama in the church. ... We don't need a biblical basis for it. We do it because people respond to it. ... With drama, we're trying to give life and excitement to the gospel."

Whitney denied drama or anything else is needed to give life and excitement to the gospel. "The point is, is it right? More importantly, is it biblical? Does it please God for us to do that?" Whitney asked. "I'm not saying there is never a place anywhere within the life of any church for drama, but certainly in preaching and in worship, we're talking about something completely different, and that is the emphasis today -- that it's used to set up or to be done in place of the (sermon) message."

3. The tendency to minimize preaching. Whitney referred the group to 1 Corinthians 1:21: "God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believed."

"God has ordained preaching in all times in all cultures," Whitney said, "as the ordinary means by which people are called to himself. ... (In 1 Corinthians 1:17) Paul is saying you can change the method without changing the message, but you can void the message of its power by the method that you use. ...

"I could tattoo John 3:16 to my chest. The message would never change, would it? But would not that be offensive to people? ... It would void the cross of its power, wouldn't it, in the sense of the communication of the message?" Whitney said.

4. Methodology. Whitney said many methods of the church growth movement are "done under the banner of one great verse (1 Corinthians 9:22): 'To the Jews, I became like a Jew. To the Gentiles, I became like a Gentile. To the weak, I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.'"

But this verse, said Whitney, refers to Paul's strategy of personal evangelism -- not a philosophy of public worship. "God has revealed how he himself wants to be worshiped," Whitney said. "He has told the kind of elements that we ought to have in our worship, and Paul did not change those in order to reach people. ...

"But in his personal evangelism ... he would adapt himself. If a Gentile wanted him to come over and have a ham sandwich, he would eat a ham sandwich with him. If a Jew wanted him to be more identifying with the law, he could do that too," Whitney said.

"There are a lot of methods that can void the cross of its power, so methods are not neutral. There are methods that are wrong," he said. "So much of the methods reflect the atheological nature of the church growth movement."

5. The doctrine of the Lord's Day. Noting The Baptist Faith and Message -- a confession of faith adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963 -- has a section on the proper day for worship, Whitney said, "Who said we could move the Lord's Day? We don't have the option to make it Wednesday or Thursday."

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Use only Bible in sermons abroad,
missionary to Ukraine advises

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Steve Haines has some advice for American preachers who come to the former Soviet Union on short-term mission trips.

"First of all, get rid of the humor. Humor is culturally based. It won't translate, anyway. Remove the jokes," said Haines who is a missionary for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Kiev, Ukraine.

"Second, remove all of the illustrations that have as a foundation the American way of life. If you're going to talk about the second car in the family that breaks down or the PTA meetings or what happened at the drive-in, let all that pass, because you couldn't possibly put that into Russian. They'd think you had dropped down from outer space," Haines told the 12th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference, a group of mostly Calvinist Southern Baptist ministers who met at Samford University July 26-29.

When Haines gives this advice to preachers who seek his counsel on arrival in Ukraine, he sometimes gets this response: "Well, if I get rid of my humor and if I get rid of my illustrations, what will I do?"

"Preach the Word," Haines responds. "(For example), say 'Open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3:16.' Read the text and declare, 'God says to us thusly.'"

"Short of humor and anecdotes and cultural references, many American preachers seem woefully inadequate to the opportunity presented to them in Ukraine -- and very short-winded," Haines said.

Speaking on "The Sufficiency of Scripture in Missions," Haines told the conference he found it necessary to rely almost exclusively on Scripture when he arrived in Ukraine in 1991.

He and his wife, Marilyn, live with their twin daughters in a 550-square-foot apartment in Kiev. He has room for very few books in their home, and most of his books are stored in 25 cartons that sit in a garage 60 kilometers away.

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"There is no room for a library. Therefore I am reduced to what the Word says," Haines told the group. "If you were cut off from your library, can you still preach? Are you good enough? Does it live in your heart well enough that if I lock the door on your library and change the key, can you still preach?"

"You should. It should live in your heart, and it should be self-evident from his Word. You should have the general structure of how God's Word harmonizes living within you," Haines said.

Haines said Ukrainian Christians are suspicious of American Christianity. "They're just not all that sure what the American might have to offer that could possibly be of any use to them, having just gone through 70 years of ferocious persecution," he said.

"They're suspicious that we are basically wealthy and apostate -- unbelievers, but extremely rich unbelievers. ... What is the crucial element to removing that superstition?" Haines asked, answering that a preacher should say, "Thus saith the Lord."

"We use the same inspired Scripture. We speak the same message," Haines noted. "The Ukrainian Baptists are all, without exception, inerrantists. Praise the Lord for that. They believe this (book) to have come from God himself, every word of it. They're not sure that we believe the same thing."

Haines recalled his first meeting with a Ukrainian Baptist official who "subjected me to a very thorough theological frisking in his office. It was, 'Up against the wall, I'm going to check you out. How about the Virgin Birth? How about the bodily resurrection? How about the Second Coming? How about the inerrant Word? How about the miracles?'"

Haines replied, "Yes, sir, I believe them all," but said "it took six months before they wanted to hear if I could preach. It took a year before I was regularly accepted in their churches as one who could adequately handle the Word of God and not subvert their faith. ...

"I am asked now regularly to preach ... Why?" Haines asked. "They have told me, 'Steve, we like your preaching because it is simply from the Bible. You don't tell war stories from back home. You don't talk about the U.S. culture. You don't tell us how wonderful it is that we've thrown off communism. You don't talk about the politics of it. You simply say, 'Please open your Bibles to thus-and-such a chapter and follow with me as we read from God's Word.' And then you tell us what it means."

The Bible is not only sufficient for missionary preaching, but it is also sufficient for the missionary's family, Haines said.

"The Bible must be sufficient for the missionary and for his family needs, because when he arrives on the field, there is precious little there that will give him immediate support," Haines noted. "The language is different and the church services are different. He does not have his Sunday school quarterly, his Sunday school teacher, the fellowship of the church, the after-service potluck dinners. He does not have any of the normal sources of support for his spiritual life and for his family's spiritual life.

"When the missionary goes to the field, he must have Christ in his heart and the Word of God to sustain him and his family because, initially, there won't be anything else there," Haines said. "It will take him a while to adjust to the churches and to learn the language and to receive the same sense of the presence of God in the national church that he received in the church back home."

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Scripture is sufficient,
say speakers at Samford

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
8/3/94

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Scripture is sufficient for evangelism, faith and practice in the church, theological correction and the Bible's own self-verification, according to speakers at the 12th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference at Samford University July 26-29.

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The conference, an annual meeting of mostly Southern Baptist ministers who are Calvinists, heard several preachers who spoke on "The Sufficiency of Scripture."

Walter Chantry, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle, Pa., read Luke 16:19-31, which is Jesus' story of a rich man who neglected the plight of a poor, unhealthy beggar named Lazarus who eventually died.

According to Jesus in the Luke account, when the rich man died, he went to hell where he conversed with the Old Testament patriarch, Abraham, who was in heaven with Lazarus. The man in hell asked Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers about the dangers of hell.

Paraphrasing Jesus' words, Chantry said Abraham's response was, "They have the Old Testament Bible. Let them listen to what ... Moses and prophets had to say in the Old Testament Scriptures."

"Do you see Abraham's argument?" Chantry asked the conferees. "The Old Testament Scriptures are sufficient to bring a man to saving faith in Jesus Christ."

Chantry said the man in hell's response was, "No, the Bible is not enough. ... They need something more than the Bible, if they are going to be saved. ... It is understandable that I did not believe and that they have not yet believed.

"I know my brothers. They're like I was, and they're going to come here unless something else is done for them."

Chantry added, "In effect, (the man in hell) is saying, 'It is excusable. If I had seen a miracle that had thrilled me, I would have believed. If I had heard a ghost come back from the dead talk to me, I would have listened. If I had had an exciting preacher or some meeting that I was in where amazing things had happened, then it would have been different.

"But all I had was the Bible. The Bible -- that's all God gave me. I am a victim."

"Sounds like America, doesn't it?" Chantry asked the audience.

Hal Wynn, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in North Fort Myers, Fla., told the group that not everyone agrees the Bible is sufficient "for all of our faith and all of our practice."

"You can get together a Roman Catholic, and you could add to him a Jehovah Witness, a Pentecostal brother and a reformed Christian, and they would all agree about infallibility," Wynn said. "They would all agree about inerrancy.

"But as you begin talking about the authority and the sufficiency -- the sole sufficiency -- of Scripture, you would begin to find them disagreeing," he said.

"You would find the Catholic beginning to say, 'It's not just the Scriptures; it's the church, too.' You would begin to find that the Jehovah Witness wants to pull out his Watchtowers and those who write that.

"You would find that the Pentecostal brother would begin to talk about the revelations that he's had, and the visions -- and you would find that the problem with him is not that the Bible is not authoritative. It is his ultimate authority, but it is not his only authority. And so he finds himself comfortable drawing from these other areas," Wynn noted.

Timothy George, dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School, spoke on Martin Luther's doctrine of Scripture -- "the primacy of Holy Scripture ... (which has) relevance for us in the life of the church today."

Luther's doctrine of Scripture opposed human subjectivity, George said. "There was the tradition of medieval mysticism -- this idea that within every human being there is a spark of divinity ... the god within. You say, 'That sounds like New Age.' Well it is; it's just in medieval garb," George noted.

George said Luther also opposed the "ecclesiastical objectivity" of the Roman Catholic Church, which regarded its own teachings and traditions as authoritative as the Bible.

Baptists today should also oppose ecclesiastical objectivity, George said, by valuing Scripture above confessions of faith and creeds.

"We should never elevate any confession above holy Scripture but always be willing to submit our confessions to the written Word of God," George said. "This is the sufficiency and primacy of Scripture against all kinds of ecclesiastical objectivity -- whether it's the pope or a presbytery or a board of deacons or anything else. Baptists are a confessional people."

Scripture also is sufficient to verify its own authority, said Tom Nettles, a Southern Baptist who is associate professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill.

"The Bible gains its authority and rests its teachings about eternity on evidence that is open to candid investigation," said Nettles, who was formerly a professor at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"The people of God have never been called on to believe that which comes with no evidence," Nettles said, adding the Bible is "a revelation which claims our loyalty by its strong demonstration of literary authenticity and historical veracity, a demonstration of its power in moral judgment, and demonstration built on its internal literary history. ... Biblical authority does not depend on an irrational and indefensible leap."

Another speaker decried the lack of belief in the sufficiency of Scripture and described what he sees as the consequences. "There is, by and large in our country today, a famine of the Word of God in the land," said Bill Ascol, the present and founding pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, La. "We live in a day when the church of Jesus Christ is beset with hyper-individualism and a drivenness toward personal fulfillment."

Referring to a recent article in U.S. News and World Report, Ascol said, "If (the magazine) is right when they say that we are involved in this nation in a cultural recession -- and I believe they are right -- then it is surely due to a doctrinal depression that has existed for some time."

Ascol urged the group to remember Christian theology should not be changed with the passing of time. "We need to remember that Christianity has a given content and continuity," he said. "It's not some unidentified quantity, as J.I. Packer says, to be reinvented through discussion in each new generation."

"Ours is a prideful age, brethren. People in our pews, people on the street, first-year seminary students who sit around coffee tables think that they're the seminal thinkers on spiritual matters."

Ascol said today's religious climate reminds him of a story told by the British preacher, Charles Spurgeon. "Spurgeon tells of the Irishman who -- when asked how things had gone at a certain religious meeting he had attended -- said, 'Oh, it was lovely. None of us knew anything, and we all taught each other.'

"Surely I'm not the only one who has attended a Sunday school class like that in my life," said Ascol, as the audience chuckled with agreement.

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Senate confirms Breyer despite
foes' religious liberty concerns By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly confirmed Stephen Breyer to the Supreme Court, as expected, although some opponents described him as insensitive to the free exercise of religion.

The Senate confirmed Breyer by an 87-9 vote July 29.

In explaining before the Senate why he would vote against the nominee, Sen. Trent Lott, R.-Miss., called Breyer's view of the First Amendment a "recipe from tyranny."

In prepared testimony for the Senate Judiciary Committee two weeks prior, free-exercise and home-school lawyer Michael Farris said Breyer's views on "free exercise of religion -- especially within the context of education -- are so far beyond the pale of acceptability that his presence on the Supreme Court would represent a clear and present danger to our freedoms."

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Both Lott and Farris based their opposition on a Breyer opinion written while he was on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. In the case, he ruled a Massachusetts school district could regulate the curricula of private schools, including religious and home schools.

In his testimony before the Judiciary Committee and in a letter to a senator, Breyer denied he opposed home schooling.

In overturning a federal court decision, Breyer ruled the district's regulations "were 'valid by default,'" presuming "the government is acting constitutionally unless the supposed aggrieved party can find some better, more constitutional alternative," Lott said on the Senate floor.

"Judge Breyer put the burden of proof not on the government, where it belongs, but on the person or group whose rights were obviously violated."

In the *New Life Baptist Academy v. East Longmeadow School District* opinion, Breyer's decision endorsed the idea "private schools can be regulated by the subjective, unwritten, discretionary opinions of public school officials" and showed a "mistrust of parents and church officials," testified Farris, president of the Home School Legal Defense Association.

The *New Life* opinion approvingly cites three decisions which Breyer says "uphold (an) effective total ban on home schooling," Farris said. In addition, Farris said Breyer supports the notion "religious schools offer 'religious education' when one is talking about government funding, but, when the issue is government regulation, he then believes these same schools offer 'secular education.'"

In Senate debate, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R.-Utah, said he shared concerns about the *New Life* ruling but was comforted by Breyer's testimony showing an understanding of the strong protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the judge's acknowledgment "there is nothing more important to a family that has (religious) principles than to be able to pass those principles and beliefs on to the next generation."

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act, enacted last year, restored a long-held standard on free exercise of religion cases, thereby providing more protection for religious liberty.

Breyer provided him with a letter satisfying his concerns about the *New Life* decision, Sen. John Warner, R.-Va., said in explaining to the Senate why he would support the nominee.

"The opinion does not endorse the view that government may prohibit home schooling. It is well established that the 'liberty' guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment ensures parents' right to 'direct the upbringing and education of children under their control.' As I stated during the Judiciary Committee hearings, I regard this principle as settled and I have no bias whatsoever against home schooling," Breyer said in a July 22 letter from which Warner read portions.

On the issue of the First Amendment's establishment clause, Hatch approved of Breyer because the judge "rejects the extreme secularist view that the establishment clause mandates an absolute wall of separation between church and state."

Hatch also said while he regrets Breyer passes President Clinton's litmus test on abortion, the judge's record "indicates that he will be far more understanding of society's power to protect the rights of the unborn than the justice whom he will replace."

Breyer replaces Harry Blackmun, who retired. Blackmun wrote the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* opinion, which legalized abortion.

Sen. Robert Smith, R.-N.H., however, said he opposed Breyer because of the judge's support of federal funding of abortion counseling and his fear the judge would uphold decisions prohibiting prayer in public schools and at graduation ceremonies.

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