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**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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September 20, 1994

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Jim Henry voices 'hope, future'  
for Southern Baptist Convention

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jim Henry, speaking of nearly 1,000 letters he has received since his election as Southern Baptist Convention president, recounted:

"(One) theme kept coming through, and that was this: Is there any hope?" for the SBC. "Do you think we're going to make it? Do you think we can move ahead?" Those questions, Henry said, came "from not only pastors but a lot of lay people."

Addressing the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 19 in Nashville, Tenn., Henry voiced Jeremiah 29:11-13 as his answer: "... 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ...'"

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., elected as SBC president last June, tapped the words "remember, recommit and refocus" in stating Southern Baptists have a hope and a future:

-- "if we'll remember" the SBC's heritage.

-- if Southern Baptists will recommit themselves to the responsibility inherent to "the largest of the Protestant denominations" in America; to the Cooperative Program channel of funding global missions and ministry; and to cooperation, trust and "talking with and not shouting at each other."

-- if the SBC will refocus on "what Christ called us to be and do ... to seek God's face, to do our business God's way."

Henry listed one specific action he already has taken, listing it under the area of trust: ending C. Barry McCarty's longtime role as head parliamentarian for the SBC's annual meetings.

McCarty, of Cincinnati, an ordained Church of Christ minister, has been SBC parliamentarian since the 1986 annual meeting in Atlanta.

Said Henry: "... this next year our parliamentarians will be made up of Southern Baptist parliamentarians. I have written Barry and I've called him and thanked him for the excellent work that he did at a critical time in our denomination. God used him. But now we need to move on ... and this is one way that we're saying we're moving on to the future; we're moving on in trust."

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Noting the SBC is moving into its Sesquicentennial year, Henry said, "Timing couldn't be better. ... We need to remind the generation coming on among us that we ride the coattails of committed laity, pastors, professors, missionaries, visionaries and institutional leaders." Some groups and individuals have "splintered off" over the years, Henry said, "but the mainstream of Southern Baptists has continued steadfastly forward."

"We're living on the capital of their investments," Henry noted. "But that is eroding. We need to reinvest ... and write new chapters that add to the lustre of our past."

The SBC must "push positively, unapologetically and boldly" the Cooperative Program, "the most successful underwriting of missions, evangelism, seminary education and church planting in church history," Henry said. First Baptist, Orlando, has led the SBC in Cooperative Program giving the last three years.

"Any restructuring, renaming or reengineering (of the Cooperative Program) must be done on the basis of enlarging its output in a meaningful way and not decreasing it," Henry said, voicing opposition to any change that "brings confusion to our people and lessens what we're currently doing."

"Our state leadership needs to speak up and be counted" in support of the Cooperative Program, Henry said. "Our state papers need to write up. Our associations need to stand up. Our churches need to move up in dollars and percentages. And our pastors need to lead the way."

Citing the "time, energy and resources" many individuals have spent in defending biblical integrity, Henry urged similar commitment to "our prime delivery system for that same good truth to be disseminated in this nation and around the world."

Those who give only "lip service" to the Cooperative Program's importance, he said, leave "the faithful in the pews uncertain and eventually persuaded to pour their resources into those projects whose leaders have shown that where their treasures are that's where their hearts are."

Other facets of SBC polity also must be underscored, Henry said. The SBC exists "to serve the churches," he said, and leaders and trustees of SBC agencies act "on the behalf of the family of churches. Our best posture on this (Executive) Committee and in our institutions is the servant mode."

In addition to the Cooperative Program, Henry noted three other areas of recommitment needed in the SBC:

-- "a stewardship of responsibility as the largest of the Protestant denominations," entailing leadership, encouragement, "being salt and light in a decadent society, ... making a denomination work in the midst of changing paradigms. ... God can use us to be a powerful tool in renewal of denominational life that leaps across denominational lines," Henry said.

-- Cooperation and trust. "We've been drinking from a deep well of mutual trust" in the SBC, Henry said. "It is, by and large, still in place, as is attested by the maintenance of our giving through economic difficulties and the struggles within our denomination and changing giving patterns among younger adults in this country."

Henry continued, "The letters I receive tell me of a deep love for the Southern Baptist Convention. ... It is a love that's so deep that some people nearly weep when they write about it. ... That only a few hundred churches of 39,000 have opted out (of the SBC) speaks of that love and loyalty."

"But hundreds stand on the brink," Henry said. "They're committed to Christ, his church and our conviction, enunciated in the Baptist Faith and Message and the Peace Committee report." Yet they desire "more openness, more of an opportunity to participate and know that they're heard," Henry said. "We must see that that trust is earned again and kept. ... (Our) people need to know that we care enough to trust the Holy Spirit working in them to cooperate."

-- "Talking with and not shouting at each other. We have brothers and sisters in Christ who have been unfairly judged and labeled because at some point they did not dot every 'i' nor cross every 't,'" Henry said. "This intolerance has burned bridges ... It has caused anger, hostility and anxiety. This is not in the spirit of Jesus Christ. We must recapture civility again ... a spirit of meekness and gentleness. This is the fruit that flows from our ingrafted nature in Jesus Christ."

Such graciousness will speak "to a lost world," Henry said. "(One) thing they do understand is how we treat one another."

In the area of "refocus," Henry said, "Let us constantly remind ourselves to keep the main thing the main thing. That is (God's) desire and that's our historic Southern Baptist strength. ... It is time that we put our best minds and hearts to the task before us. We've had a lot of negative publicity. Why not take a fresh initiative? Let's let our nation and our people see the heart and soul of Southern Baptists."

"Did you see what God did with True Love Waits?" Henry asked. "Hurricane Andrew? South Georgia? Volunteers? The courage of missionaries in Rwanda? One of the thousands of sharp students in our seminaries? The scores of centers for pregnancy ministries? The gospel in a hundred-plus languages preached every Sunday in Southern Baptist churches? The materials, the Bibles we publish? The dedicated lay people on mission in the marketplace leading this country?"

"Some way, can't we begin to project that? If the Mormons can do it, can't we do it a lot better than them?"

Henry stated, "It's time to get off our personal soapboxes that focus on concerns that are important but not primary -- and often result in tying the hands of our institutional agency leadership and keeping them in a sense of guerrilla warfare, taxing their creativity and energy -- while a lost world could care less."

When Southern Baptist's seek God's glory, "his will, his intimacy, his face, when we challenge our people with imaginative and meaningful ministry that calls for boldness, faith and commitment, when our methods and our manners are shaped by the heart of God, God has pronounced, 'You'll find me. You'll find me,'" Henry said.

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The full text of Henry's address is posted in the SBCNet News Room as henry.txt.

**Executive Committee abortion stance  
gets Annuity Board reps' cooperation**

**Baptist Press  
9/20/94**

**By Art Toalston**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The president and trustee chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board promised cooperative efforts on the issue of abortion to members of the SBC Executive Committee during the first session of the committee's Sept. 19-20 meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

The commitments were voiced prior to unanimous Executive Committee approval of a motion requesting Annuity Board trustees to add abortion providers and companies making contributions to abortion providers to the list of investments prohibited under board policy. Currently Annuity Board policy prohibits investments in the liquor, tobacco, gambling and pornography industries. Atop the list of pro-lifers' concerns are companies contributing to Planned Parenthood.

The Executive Committee action marked the fourth time in a year it has discussed the question of Annuity Board investment policy regarding abortion-related stocks.

Annuity Board President Paul Powell told Executive Committee members Sept. 19, "You've asked us to study it, to consider it, and that's what we're willing to do." But, he noted, the Executive Committee recommendation will become board policy only if Annuity Board trustees adopt it.

"We agree with what you're trying to do," trustee chairman Richard Scott told Executive Committee members. Scott is dean of Baylor University's business school in Waco, Texas, and has been chairman of the Annuity Board trustee investment committee the last several years.

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"We're going to do the best that we can to try to live up to the spirit of what you're doing," Scott continued. "But you need to recognize and work with us on the fact it's a lot easier to say it than it is to operationalize it."

Scott said it may prove difficult, for example, to determine the extent to which any company, at local decision-making levels, may make contributions to abortion providers.

"It takes a lot of time, effort and money to research these things," Scott said.

Scott told Executive Committee members the Annuity Board has identified a mutual fund in the past several months that is attempting to screen investments in sync with concerns of Southern Baptists who oppose abortion, pornography and use of alcohol and tobacco. The fund, known as the Timothy Fund, is based in Winter Park, Fla.

But, Scott said, the fund only has a four-month operating history and the Annuity Board cannot yet in good conscience add it to board investment options.

Annuity Board officials have visited with the fund's officials, Scott noted.

"We're going to watch this fund over the next two years. If they can make it and if they can give us a reasonable history of earnings over that period of time, it would be our intentions to bring them on as a money manager and offer that as an alternative," he said.

Otherwise, Scott said, the Annuity Board has not found a mutual fund that "does the same screening that we as Southern Baptists would like to see."

And a board survey of 2,000 participants in its annuity plans found only 20 willing to put all their money in a new, perhaps lower-yielding fund and only about 100 to put some of their money in, Scott said. Such numbers do not justify the \$2-3 million needed to create the fund and would not provide the \$8-10 million needed in initial investments, he said.

No matter what investment fund is utilized, Scott noted, the biggest supporter of abortion -- the U.S. government -- will not be affected. "You really can't be in the investment business," he said, "without holding government securities."

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Author of new SBC history book  
sees a people of faith and hope

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

By Charles Richardson

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists, "for all their biases and weaknesses, are a people of faith and hope," the author of the sesquicentennial history of the Southern Baptist Convention has concluded.

Jesse C. Fletcher, chancellor and Connally professor of missions at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, has written "The Southern Baptist Convention, A Sesquicentennial History" published by Broadman & Holman Publishers and released in September.

"The history is the way we were and how we got to be who we are," Fletcher said in an interview. The 467-page narrative includes one chapter titled "The Battle for the Gavel, 1979-90," detailing the denomination's "conservative resurgence" beginning with the election of Adrian Rogers as SBC president in June 1979.

He described that event as "not the end of a campaign, but the beginning of one," adding: "It soon became obvious this controversy would be different from anything Southern Baptists had experienced."

Recognizing the difficulty of writing a history in connection with controversy, Fletcher wrote in his introduction: "Because of the political climate and the author's determined effort to avoid undue bias, only materials published or collected in libraries have been used."

He said SBC annuals were "primary" sources for much of the history.

"But, background to this material is crucial to its understanding and is found in Baptist state paper articles, journals and periodicals, as well as collections of letters and papers of the principal players found in libraries and other repositories," Fletcher added.

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Six years in the making, Fletcher said he spent the first three years doing research for the book and the last three in writing. Going back in history to 1609, the book includes events and actions through the 1993 SBC annual meeting in Houston.

During his "final rewrite," he said he had a year of getting reader reaction. The book was used as a text in his classes at the HSU Logsdon School of Theology and in church history courses taught by Leon McBeth at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

"The author of any project of this scope is soon deeply grateful for all who have previously plowed the ground, whether by field or by furrow," he wrote. "While required to go back to many of the same sources and sometimes coming to different conclusions, this author wants to confess his indebtedness to this company."

Fletcher said he found "surprisingly helpful" in gathering material for inclusion in the updated history "unpublished dissertations emerging from graduate studies in seminaries and universities both in and outside Southern Baptist life. These studies not only yielded important perspective but also pointed to key sources."

Official observation of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention will be marked at the 1995 annual meeting in Atlanta, June 20-22.

"I have a strong conviction that any people has to be informed by its own history to be effective and to maintain perspective," Fletcher said.

After reading an advance copy of the manuscript, Southern Baptist statesman Herschel Hobbs said the sesquicentennial history book "both informs of the past and inspires for the future of the Southern Baptist Convention. Every Southern Baptist should read and reread it and keep it close at hand as a ready reference book."

Fletcher's entire career has been spent in denominational roles, including 14 years as president of Hardin-Simmons, a Texas Baptist school. Earlier, he served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., and worked for 15 years with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The book is available through Baptist Book Stores at a special introductory price of \$23.97 through December 31. After Jan. 1, the price will be \$29.99. It may be purchased at the stores or by calling 1-800-233-1123.

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Richardson is director of media relations at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following story should be substituted for (BP) story titled "Baptists plan quick aid in post-invasion Haiti," dated 9/16/94.

Baptists plan quick aid  
in U.S.-occupied Haiti

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--While the world breathed a sigh of relief after negotiators averted a U.S. invasion of Haiti, Southern Baptists stepped up relief plans to ease the pain of suffering Haitians.

The projects -- a joint effort of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board -- likely will send at least 150 U.S. volunteers to Haiti. First they'll distribute food to hungry Haitians. Additional teams may work in medical care, water well repair, water purification and construction.

"We're grateful it appears there will be a peaceful solution" to the crisis in Haiti, said Ronald Wilson, who directs Foreign Mission Board work in the Caribbean. "We're evaluating when we can return to Haiti through various means so we can minister to human needs."

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Planners first thought the relief projects would occur shortly after an expected U.S. military attack against Haiti. That scenario changed late Sept. 18 when negotiators led by former President Jimmy Carter reached an 11th-hour agreement with Haitian military leader Raoul Cedras. The deal, made as 61 U.S. invasion planes were on their way to Haiti, requires the nation's military leaders to step down Oct. 15.

"We're praying for a smooth transition so we can minister, but also for the nation of Haiti. We very much want a peaceful transition," said Wilson.

Missionaries David and Judy Heady, from Owensboro, Ky., and some of their colleagues spent most of the day Sept. 18 praying for U.S. and Haitian leaders trying to negotiate a settlement. The Headys, Southern Baptists, serve in Haiti through Global Outreach, a mission agency in Tupelo, Miss.

"There's been an extreme amount of tension," reported Heady by telephone Sept. 19 from his home overlooking Port-au-Prince bay as he watched some of the first U.S. soldiers land in Haiti. "But we're thankful to God that in that 11th hour the troops were turned around and we didn't have a forceful entry by the U.S. military into this country."

A team of Southern Baptists hopes to travel to Haiti to assess human needs as soon as arrangements can be made, Wilson said. The group will include Foreign Mission Board missionaries who left Haiti just before a ban on U.S. commercial flights there took effect June 25.

They are career missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge, from Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Glendale, Calif., respectively; International Service Corps workers Ed and Mary Brentham, from Belton, Texas; and journeyman Todd Lowe, from Central, S.C.

"We'll go in as soon as we have a way to go," said Rutledge Sept. 19.

Other assessment team members likely will include leaders from the Brotherhood Commission, based in Memphis, Tenn.; the Foreign Mission Board, based in Richmond, Va.; and some state Baptist conventions experienced in relief projects, Wilson said.

The team will determine what needs Southern Baptist volunteers can best meet in Haiti. "We'll seek to meet the most immediate needs," said Wilson. That probably will be hunger relief.

"The information coming out of Haiti says that the food crisis is becoming worse and worse," said Rutledge, who has been monitoring the situation while staying temporarily in Hollywood, Fla.

Heady confirmed that report in a Sept. 16 interview. "Yesterday in our (medical) clinics, three-fourths of the babies we examined were in states of severe malnutrition," said Heady. "We had a 4-year-old in last week who weighed 16 pounds and a 3-year-old yesterday who weighed 12 pounds. The embargo has had a devastating effect on the public."

American Baptist missionary Charles Chapman, who left Haiti in June, has heard similar reports from Haitian Baptists and missionary colleagues still working there.

"They're holding up under very difficult circumstances," Chapman said of Haitian Baptists. "They're seeing in their churches a lot more people hungry and ill and many more funerals, not from violence from the military but just from the economic situation."

Based on such reports, Southern Baptist relief planners expect volunteers first will work in food distribution for about seven weeks. Project logistics are still being worked out in light of the changing scene in Haiti.

"There are a lot of things up in the air," said Rutledge Sept. 19, shortly after talking to a Haitian Baptist leader in Port-au-Prince. "We haven't been able to determine whether the embargo has been lifted although we've heard that reported on the news. We do know the (commercial) airlines haven't received information that the airspace has been opened up over Haiti, so they aren't flying. But they do plan to do so as soon as that airspace is opened."

Meanwhile, Southern Baptists hope to "go in so quickly that we can provide food for people until (other humanitarian groups) get going," Rutledge added. Later, the food project would be turned over to Haitian Baptists and volunteer efforts would shift to other areas of need.

The Brotherhood Commission will enlist qualified Southern Baptist volunteers for the relief projects.

"We'll contact those state conventions who have well-trained volunteers for the work in the early stages," said Russell Griffin, the Brotherhood's assistant vice president. "Then we'll broaden the appeal for other volunteers."

Qualified Southern Baptists who want to volunteer for these projects should call the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-280-1891 or (901) 722-3787. Financial contributions for the Haiti project may be sent to the human needs department of the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767 or to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

Wilson anticipates the Foreign Mission Board will contribute "a very sizable amount" of money to the project, but exact figures have not yet been determined. The mission board also expects to donate several water purification units to help provide clean water for Haitians.

Later, Southern Baptist missionaries Jim and Grace Ziler will move to Haiti to help with the water project. The Zilers, who were to have started working in Haiti in July, are temporarily serving among Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. They are from Avilla and New Haven, Mo., respectively.

Since Foreign Mission Board workers left Haiti in June, Haitian Baptists have continued to operate an agricultural program funded by Southern Baptists. A water well project supported by Southern Baptists was put on hold late last year because of operational problems caused by economic sanctions against Haiti.

U.S. missionaries who stayed in Haiti have tried to continue their ministries despite the tensions. Early Sept. 19, Heady and his colleagues delivered food to hunger relief centers in his area.

They saw some Haitians standing on a rooftop looking at the U.S. ships in the distance. "It appeared the people were actually numb, to the point of not even recognizing us," Heady said.

Heady called on Christians worldwide to "pray without ceasing that we don't see loss of lives. There's still a tremendous potential for that on both sides."

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State execs review draft  
of HMB committee report

By Martin King

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

ATLANTA (BP)--Executive directors from more than 30 state Baptist conventions reviewed the confidential draft report concerning the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's relationship with state conventions.

Roy Smith, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, called the discussion "a helpful process."

"I think it most important that we had a chance to share in the discussion of what we might do to enhance our work in the future," Smith told Baptist Press following the meeting, which he termed "open, candid and helpful." Smith serves as president of the state executive organization.

The state executives met Sept. 16 with members of the controversial committee which was created by a vote of the HMB executive committee last June.

HMB board chairman Bob Curtis, pastor of Ballwin (Mo.) Baptist Church, agreed the meeting was beneficial, saying it cleared up misunderstandings and misperceptions. "I think the meeting alleviated a lot of preconceived concern about (the committee's) intent," Curtis said. "Our purpose has never been to investigate the state conventions but to strengthen and enhance our relationships."

Greg Martin, HMB director from Mississippi who made the motion creating the committee and a member of the study committee, agreed the meeting with state execs was positive.

"This was a very open and honest dialogue. There should be more meetings like this between groups in the Southern Baptist Convention," Martin said.

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The committee report distributed at the meeting was labeled "working draft." Curtis said all comments from the meeting would be shared with committee members prior to their next meeting in two weeks. According to Curtis, the committee will finalize its recommendations and present them to the HMB's administrative committee, with full board action anticipated in December.

Curtis explained the report is confidential at this point because it is still a draft but said it is divided into three sections. "The preface reiterates our intent regarding the motion. A report section lays out the historical foundations for our relationship with state conventions, particularly addressing both the autonomy as well as interdependence of our entities," he said. "The recommendations area will seek to put the committee work to rest, as well as focus on the mutual trust and understanding necessary for us to work together."

Both Curtis and Smith told Baptist Press several members of the group made a point of affirming the leadership of Larry Lewis, HMB president, and his staff.

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'Authenticated' gospel can draw  
boomers, busters, prof asserts      By Cameron Crabtree

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Authentic love is the most potent force for shaping Christian worship and evangelism to reach the current generation of young adults and teen-agers, a California pastor asserted.

"People are drawn like magnets to places of authentic love," said Sam Williams, pastor of BayMarin Community Church in San Rafael, Calif. He was featured speaker at the Church Music and Worship Workshop Sept. 15-17 at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif. The workshop was sponsored by the seminary, the California Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Describing unchurched baby boomers and baby busters in America, Williams said, "They won't go to 'church-as-usual' but they will go to church where the message is authenticated in the lives of people who preach it and claim it and sing it."

Williams, adjunct professor at Golden Gate Seminary, asserted the generation that "left the church was not turned off because they rejected the gospel or didn't believe the Bible." Instead, they were "turned off by what happens in business meetings, church splits and by endless arguing over things none of us really know much about anyway."

Contrasting quarrelsome behavior in churches to the unity of New Testament believers following Pentecost, Williams said the greatest evangelism tool is authentic love for the brethren.

"Those who would be reconcilers in our world must be reconciled to one another," he said. "Until we are made one by the Master, our culture will not know we are Christians."

Worship is one of the ways churches can come together, Williams said.

"It is not something you attend; it is something you do all the time," he remarked. "When worship becomes a force and not a form in our lives, it will transform the way we live our lives and then our world."

In addition to the emphasis on worship, Williams used the Book of Acts to identify at least three models of evangelism with which Christians must be familiar in the years ahead:

-- Proclamation. "That's the one we're most familiar with, because it's been modeled in the churches we've grown up in, whether by preaching or personal evangelism."

People desperately need to hear the gospel, Williams said, but churches need to better identify the gospel.

"The gospel is not the bad news about pornography, divorce, homosexuals or abortion ... it is the really good news about a relationship with Jesus Christ," he affirmed. "People are living the bad news, and the last thing they need is one more preacher to come and yell and scream at them and tell how bad they are."

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-- Persuasion. "This is the model of evangelism in the second half of the Book of Acts in which the gospel goes into a pluralistic culture," Williams said. "It involves longer periods of time and allows other people to express that which they believe wrongly, but does not condemn them for it."

Persuasion evangelism involves time, respecting another person's wrong opinion and giving them the freedom to express it, Williams said. "It places ultimate power in the Word of God and in the Spirit of God and not in our evangelistic methods."

-- Presence. "Evangelism is finally and ultimately presence," Williams said. "Without it the other two don't matter."

The task of the evangelist, he said, is to share the truth and allow the Spirit of God to convince someone it is true.

"The most convicting thing about the life of Jesus Christ to me was how comfortable sinners were around him," Williams stated. "If we are ever going to evangelize our culture again, we're going to have to get beyond what the evil people do, see them as they are and see what evil has created in their lives. Jesus had compassion on them."

"If you hate sinners you're not close enough to them," Williams said. "When you get close to them, when you become a presence in their lives, it changes the way you see them."

Williams reserved criticism for his own generation of church leadership.

"To those of us my age, to those who have been pastors and church leaders during the past 30 years, belongs the dubious distinction of being the first generation of church leaders in America who lost our culture," Williams said. "With all the conferencing and education and property and programs, we have lost it."

He characterized the "lost generation" as broken and tender.

"The enormity of problems people are dealing with every day is so great they are going to anyone they think will do them good," Williams said. "The place where we begin changing our culture is where they are hurting."

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Baptist Book Stores  
reduce positions

Baptist Press  
9/20/94

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--To position the 65-store chain of Baptist Book Stores to "operate more efficiently in a competitive environment," a total of 116 full- and part-time positions in the stores are being eliminated, including 80 vacant positions, according to Mark Scott, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's retail division.

The changes are part of overall restructuring efforts being completed at the board.

Scott said he 36 affected people work in 18 stores in the chain. The Nashville Baptist Book Store had the largest number of positions eliminated with seven.

Four people among the 36 are eligible for retirement. The remainder will receive career transition and outplacement assistance along with severance pay based on years of service.

"These changes are part of implementation of a new staffing philosophy made necessary by today's competitive environment," Scott said.

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