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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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September 22, 1994

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Former Miss. College president  
faces 20-count federal indictment

Baptist Press  
9/22/94

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--A federal grand jury returned a 20-count indictment Sept. 21 against Lewis Nobles Jr., former president of Mississippi College, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Justice.

The indictment was announced by U.S. Attorney George Phillips, Hinds County District Attorney Edward Peters, FBI Special Agent-in-Charge David W. "Woody" Johnson and IRS District Director Robert Douthitt.

The indictment charges Nobles with six counts of mail fraud as part of a scheme going back to January 1977, in which Nobles allegedly systematically diverted contributions intended for the Baptist-affiliated college to his own use.

Nobles also was charged with five counts of money laundering based upon manipulation of funds he allegedly diverted through a complex series of bank accounts. The grand jury also charged that during calendar years 1989 through 1992, Nobles evaded income taxes on more than \$1.7 million which he had converted to his own use during those years.

The indictment includes four counts of violating the Mann Act, also known as the White Slavery Law. Those counts charge Nobles with enticing women to travel in interstate commerce for the purpose of engaging in sexual conduct that constituted a crime in the states where the conduct occurred. Finally, the indictment included one criminal forfeiture count in which the government seeks to strip Nobles of approximately \$1.46 million in real and personal property related to Nobles' illegal activities.

If convicted, Nobles could face a maximum penalty of five years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine on each of the five mail fraud and four Mann Act counts. The four tax evasion charges carry a potential maximum prison term and/or a maximum fine of \$100,000 each. The maximum penalty for the five money laundering charges is 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$500,000 on each count.

District Attorney Peters, who cooperated in the investigation and served as a special assistant U.S. Attorney during the grand jury proceedings, has agreed to forego state charges until the federal case has been resolved.

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U.S. Attorney Phillips said, "The criminal conduct described in this indictment should make it clear that this was a massive white collar crime investigation. The agents who worked on this case have done an extraordinary job in organizing the evidence and presenting it to the grand jury. I also commend the officials at Mississippi College who originally discovered the problem, brought it to the attention of this office and the district attorney and have continued to cooperate fully throughout this investigation."

Phillips also noted an indictment is only an allegation of criminal conduct and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proved guilty at a trial on the merits.

Arraignment for Nobles was set for 2:30 p.m. Sept. 22 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Alfred G. Nicols Jr.

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Georgia executive committee keeps  
CP funding; changes gift categories

Baptist Press  
9/22/94

By William Neal

ATLANTA (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Convention's executive committee reaffirmed its support of the Cooperative Program, while adopting a proposal designed to help diffuse an ongoing conflict over how mission gifts to the convention are reported.

In a long meeting Sept. 13, characterized by good will and unanimous votes, the executive committee adopted a proposed 1995 Cooperative Program budget for Georgia, subject to approval by the Georgia Baptist Convention at its annual meeting in Macon Nov. 14-16.

The record CP budget of \$34.6 million was approved without opposition. It calls for an increase of 2.74 percent over the '94 budget and continues the 50/50 split between national and state causes, after taking out approximately 10 percent of the overall budget for shared responsibilities. This continues to represent the most generous percentage of gifts going to national causes among all the state conventions related to the SBC, Georgia officials said.

The issue of how to report missions gifts through the convention was addressed in a recommendation from the Committee To Study Harmony and Cooperation, which was appointed late last year in response to a motion made at the 1993 Georgia Baptist Convention. Floyd Roebuck, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rome, Ga., had called for the study after questions had been raised over what constituted a cooperating Georgia Baptist church.

The 1993 Committee on Nominations announced last fall it would not consider any Georgia Baptist for inclusion on boards and committees of the convention and its institutions unless those individuals were members of churches that gave at least 7 percent of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program. That requirement in effect eliminated over half the churches of the convention and the members of those congregations from consideration.

In a report presented as information to the executive committee and to be presented to the Georgia Baptist Convention meeting in Macon, the Harmony and Cooperation Committee reaffirmed the stand of the convention on the total autonomy of the local church. While referring to the convention's historic commitment to the Cooperative Program as "the principal channel of financial support of Baptist work at home and abroad," the report goes on to state: "We recognize the tremendous responsibility of the Committee on Nominations and the Georgia Baptist Convention to select for nomination the very finest leadership available from all Georgia Baptist churches to serve in the elected positions of the Convention. Further, we ask the Committee on Nominations to always seek to reflect the diversity within the Convention in its choice of nominees, and we affirm the concept that all Georgia Baptists are worthy of consideration to serve in Georgia Baptist life."

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The study committee recommended and the executive committee approved a change in the way mission gifts through the convention are reported. In the past gifts from churches were basically reported in two columns: one for Cooperative Program and another for total gifts, with designated CP gifts noted as "restricted" and the particular exclusions listed.

In the future gifts will be listed in four columns: 1) Cooperative Program, 2) Designated Cooperative Program Causes (without listing particular restrictions), 3) Other Mission Gifts (which includes special offerings, and designated gifts such as those going to the Children's Homes) and 4) Total Gifts.

The main intent in changing the method of reporting is to do away with the use of the "restricted" terminology because of its negative connotation and replace it with the "designated" label. The committee's report stated: "We recommend that our method of reporting mission gifts from our churches seek in every way to emphasize the positive good being accomplished through these gifts and that the method of reporting comply with the New Testament principle of edification of the churches . . . ."

The Committee To Study Harmony And Cooperation was a rather diverse group of Georgia Baptist leaders who represented both churches committed to the Cooperative Program as the only legitimate method of supporting missions and others that divide their gifts between CP and other mission organizations such as the Baptist moderates' Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or who designate their gifts to go only to certain portions of the CP budget.

It was anticipated that if such a diverse committee could come up with a unanimous recommendation that it would pass in both the executive committee and the Georgia Baptist Convention. Committee chairman Bill Perry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Statesboro, admitted the committee had been on a "roller coaster ride" during much of the year and there were times when he was discouraged over the prospects of coming to an agreement. But in commenting upon the committee's ability to reach consensus within the last several weeks, Perry stated: "The Spirit of God was alive and working in that process."

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Polish seminary complex opens;  
Southern Baptist help noted

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press  
9/22/94

RADOSC, Poland (BP)--Southern Baptists from North Carolina and Arkansas were among those recognized during Sept. 17-18 ceremonies dedicating a new Baptist seminary and conference center in formerly communist Poland.

Polish Baptists have been working since 1989 to complete the \$1 million facility, a complex of five major buildings in the fast-growing area of Radosc near Warsaw. The seminary building's interior is only partially complete, but classes began meeting there for the first time Sept. 19.

North Carolina Baptists have contributed heavily to the construction project as a result of their 1990-92 partnership with Polish Baptists. Southern Baptists from the state composed the majority of the 36 foreign visitors at the dedication, attended by about 400 people, including Baptist leaders from Germany, Belarus, Sweden and other countries.

Layman J.M. "Jimmy" Shults, a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, Ark., also has given \$35,000 for Polish Baptist work during the past six years. Shults, once a hog producer and now a real estate investor, had wanted to do something for Poland since World War II. During the war, two Polish nurses cared for Shults after he suffered severe frostbite while being marched by German soldiers to a prison camp.

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Shults' latest gift, \$15,000 given in memory of his late wife, Victoria, will buy a printing press for the Polish Baptist Union. The press will print newspapers, publicity materials, Bible studies and other church-related items. His first gift to Baptists in Poland came while Eastern Europe was still closed to the West. A plaque in the union's new printing facility at the seminary complex acknowledges Shults' generosity.

Moldovan Baptists, meanwhile, provided tradesmen for the seminary and conference center. With the money they earned they built a new church in Moldova.

"God prepared for us people who in the right time were appointed to do the Lord's task," said Konstanty Wiazowski, president of the Baptist Union of Poland, as he thanked all who helped build the seminary.

Seventeen students are training for pastoral ministry and full-time Christian service at the seminary. For now, 12 single students are sharing a three-bedroom apartment in a building that one day will be occupied by teachers and staff. Student housing eventually will open in the seminary building.

The students are "eager for the new term and eager for being equipped," said John Floyd, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for work in Europe. Floyd joined those who gave greetings and prayed for the seminary.

"They need another \$100,000 to finish off the facility," said Floyd. "They're looking at another year of hard work." Meanwhile, four of the five buildings in the complex are at least partly usable.

Tony Cupit, representing the Baptist World Alliance at the dedication, praised the vision of the small community of Polish Baptists -- about 3,500 believers in 56 churches -- for making the seminary dream a reality.

The facility "would grace any city and ... will bring great glory to God," Cupit said.

Radosc has been a spiritual nerve center for Baptists for more than 70 years. A former Roman Catholic priest who embraced Baptist beliefs made the property available for a Bible school in 1923, and it eventually was conveyed to Baptists. A Swiss-style home on the site -- once used for feeding orphans -- still stands. Polish Baptists have used it for conferences and assemblies through the years.

Gustaw Cieslar, pastor of two Polish Baptist congregations, will direct the seminary. Foreign Mission Board missionary Mark Edworthy is teaching a class on evangelism this fall at the new seminary. Later he will teach courses on preaching, missions and discipleship. Edworthy and his wife, Susie, are assigned to church planting in the Warsaw area.

Missionaries Mark and Tatjana McNeil, who live at the seminary now, will be assigned to church planting in Bialystok, a city near the Polish border with Belarus, after they complete language study.

"We are building for the future," said Arsenius Krasnopolski, construction manager. "The architects and I tried to imagine every future eventually that Polish Baptists may need and we have tried to make provision for this."

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Mike Creswell and Wendy Ryan contributed to this story.

Futurists urge church to care  
for the world, not conform to it By Mark Reimer

Baptist Press  
9/22/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The non-Christian world loves pierced ears but not pierced hands, futurist Leonard Sweet told participants at the Conference on Effective Church Leadership at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Christians should be willing to be punished by the world for not conforming to its standards, Sweet asserted Sept. 20 at the conference sponsored by Southwestern's Scarborough Institute for Effective Church Leadership. He is chancellor and professor of church history at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

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"In this world, first-person singular is all there is. The world doesn't want conversion but adhesion," Sweet said before citing the Christian's responsibility to choose who God wants him or her to be.

"When people connect the dots of your life, what do they see?" Sweet asked his audience of Southwestern students and about 70 pastors of various denominations. "The world connects the dots and sees cars, houses and Elvis. The church's task is to help the world see the reality of Christ. To beat out the world, we have to be willing to make changes because life dictates that we must either change or be changed."

Rather than being frightened by change, the church must "move from maintenance to missions. Why can't the church make Jesus more alive than Elvis?" Sweet challenged. He quickly noted change in and of itself is not necessarily good. "We must not let the moment define the yes."

Later during the conference, futurist Tom Sine said Christians in America in the 21st century will have to face a sobering truth: "(The) church is going out of business in the West."

Sine, a church consultant on world concerns, has taught on the university level and is a noted Christian author. At the conference, he shared his desire for the so-called "Baby Buster" generation to shape a new church for a changing world. He emphasized the importance of urgency: "I come as one very concerned, because as I work with people at seminaries and college campuses, I find gifted, bright people who have limited themselves.

"You are preparing to take over the church ... you are living at a threshold time," Sine reminded seminary students. In order to make good decisions, Christians need to know the landscape of the 21st century, he said.

Sine noted while the Western church is in decline, the Third World church is thriving and growing. As the gap widens between rich people and poor people worldwide, Christians must realize that "the day of American missionary imperialism is over."

"Our focus is faulty because my generation has sold your generation the wrong dream," Sine said. "We need to call a new generation to help the church put first things first."

There are expanding national opportunities for Christians in overlooked areas for ministry such as children living in poverty, Sine reported.

"In the 1990s, we need a wake-up call. God loves the kids who made it as well as the kids who didn't. I rarely find evangelicals reaching out to the at-risk kids in the streets of America," he said. However, Christians should try to assist people in helping themselves, because "the handout approach is not what we need."

Sine cited the current opportunity for churches to reach the "buster" generation by rethinking and restructuring traditional outreach strategies. He said the key to reaching that generation for Christ is to take the Bible seriously as a vision for the future.

Too often, Christians have neglected this world for the next world, Sine said. He reminded "the future of God has to do with a new heaven and a new earth." It is high time for believers to "burst the wineskins of the conventional" and implement new strategies. He proposed mentorships, increased emphasis on small-group ministry, creation of surrogate families for troubled youths and development of Christian housing communities.

"It's no accident that you're in seminary during the last decade of the 20th century," Sine said. "Your purpose has to do with the God who is intent on making all things new."

**BSSB's Edgemon urges churches  
to move beyond 'ancient paradigm'**

By Cameron Crabtree

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Churches are not meeting needs of their communities just because their doors are open, a Southern Baptist discipleship leader told students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

"Many churches are built on an ancient paradigm," said Roy Edgemon, director of discipleship and family development at the Baptist Sunday School Board. "We can no longer just open up the doors for worship and Sunday school and think we're going to meet the needs of the community."

Edgemon was among a host of Sunday School Board program directors speaking at the seminary's Sunday School Board Emphasis Sept. 13-16.

"The reason so many churches are not growing today is that they're no longer relevant to their communities," Edgemon warned. "The gospel is always relevant, but the way we communicate it may be irrelevant." He urged churches to look closely at their congregations and community cultures to determine effective approaches to ministry.

Edgemon also highlighted the Sunday School Board's new "1-5-4- Principle" as a way to get churches growing again. A book by that title was released by the Sunday School Board earlier this year, written by Gene Mims, the board's church growth group vice president.

"There is one commission for the church and that is Christ's command to go into all the world making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them," Edgemon said. "That really is the center, the heartbeat of any church that wants to grow."

With the Great Commission at the forefront, Edgemon said, a church should exhibit five functions: evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry and worship.

"Everything the church should be doing is built on these five functions," he said. Using discipleship and ministry as examples, he said: "Discipleship is not just at the beginning of the Christian experience. Every member of your church has an unlimited capacity for spiritual growth.

"Out of discipleship, where you're helping people grow and discover their spiritual gifts, you allow their freedom to do their own ministry," he said. "The church that is not willing to minister is not going to grow."

Edgemon claimed churches can expect four things as a result of the five functions: numerical growth, spiritual growth, expansion of ministries and a growing practice of missions.

But he warned churches must be prepared for growth.

"I believe God will bring revival to a church when it's ready," he said. "Most churches are not ready for revival because they wouldn't know what to do with the people who would come."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "SBC Executive Committee urges caution in CP chang in states," dated 9/21/94, please add the following after the 5th paragraph to create a new 6th paragraph:

The resolution also included three attachments produced by the committee's convention relations office which described the theological differences between the SBC and th CBF.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Killing abortion doctors immoral, Southern Baptist leaders assert," dated 9/21/94, the first words of the second paragraph should be revised to: The 12-page document ...

Also, in the fifth paragraph from the end, please replace the word revived with the word revised.

The paragraph should read:

Gushee prepared a first draft, which was revised by the committee ... .

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