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**Black church leaders examine steps
toward greater racial inclusiveness**

**Baptist Press
7/20/95**

By Charles Willis

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Leaders among Southern Baptist African Americans talked July 17-21 of desired "next steps after the Atlanta resolution" they believe will take the Southern Baptist Convention toward greater racial inclusiveness.

Speaking informally between sessions of Black Church Leadership Conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, five black Southern Baptist leaders affirmed actions already in place by denominational agencies and called for more personal involvement by churches and individuals.

Emmanuel McCall, pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, College Park, Ga., was part of the 16-member committee that drafted the "Resolution of Racial Reconciliation on the 150th Anniversary of The Southern Baptist Convention," approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in June.

"The denomination has already been doing things that would be considered implementation," McCall observed. "Each agency has been doing things consciously to improve race relations. They have been in place for a long time. The resolution simply gives the efforts additional impetus.

"Southern (Baptist Theological) Seminary," he continued, "is a good illustration. Years ago a Black Church Studies program was begun for the benefit of white students to teach how to relate in cross-cultural ministries. For the benefit of black students, the J.V. Bottoms Scholarship was established in honor of the first black student to have graduated with his class at the seminary in 1952."

McCall said Southern hired a black staff person to relate to black seminarians, another example representative of actions at the seminaries.

"The big impetus came in 1968 with the 'Statement on Crisis in Our Nation,' through which the convention charged all agencies to be deliberate in their actions toward improved relations.

"A number of positive actions have been taken, and I'd like to see more of it," McCall said. "For example, the Sunday School Board is including black images in its materials, and black writers are being enlisted.

"I would like to see more blacks involved in other weeks at the conference centers," he added.

"The SBC Pastors' Conference has begun using black Southern Baptists as speakers instead of black pastors outside the convention. I hope more of these can be used."

McCall said he is aware materials containing practical suggestions for reconciliation are to be published by the SBC Christian Life Commission and that Woman's Missionary Union has an upcoming emphasis on cultural diversity. The Home Mission Board has had materials on race relations available for many years, he said.

Marvin Boyd, pastor of New Birth Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., said he believes needs center on personal involvement.

"Many churches indicate they have an open-door policy. But we need to go beyond open-door to the open heart. There has to be aggressive action to find black people. They are lost, regardless of color."

Boyd said black congregations, likewise, should be witnessing to lost white people.

"Every community is in transition. You can't just pack up and leave like we used to," he observed. "Churches that are reaching black people and that are large enough can look for some black staff persons."

Boyd, who spent much of his life in the military, recalled his experience in 1975 when his family joined a Southern Baptist church as the only non-white members. He recalled the efforts of some members, including the pastor, to help his family feel as comfortable as possible.

"As a military person, I had related to all kinds of people in all kinds of settings, except in church," he said.

"The main thing that will drive this (race relations effort) to its proper conclusion is interpersonal relationships," he said. "Is there an effort on my part to get to know your family? Do I include persons who are different from me in recreational activities?"

In church events, Boyd continued, "we've got to start looking for the best person to do the job. As blacks, when we need someone to lead something, we tend to think of a brother. If we need a speaker, we need to ask who is the best."

Boyd said black church members need to "unlearn" attitudes and behaviors just as white church members do.

"When I first got involved in this work and we would do surveys, black people would say, 'No need to stop here; this is a white family.'

"There are a lot of things we do not do intentionally, but we have to change our behavior. The church is not primarily for the people who are already there. What do we need to do to make it more attractive to the ones who aren't here yet?"

Both Boyd and McCall said churches need to go beyond the once-a-year pulpit exchange or joint worship service that both black and white churches have used as an effort at race relations.

Doing things together regularly, he said in contrast, "helps people grow in their love for each other."

He recommended joint events at least quarterly in which a black church and a white church share a training event, a retreat or a Bible study.

Gwen Williams, a music missionary, author and member of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, said she believes the key to improved race relations is "to start being real. Quit trying to make me something I am not.

"I see this as a salad bowl," she continued. "Some of us are lettuce and some are tomatoes. I am a tomato. Don't try to make me lettuce or garlic or bacon bits. Together, we'll make a great salad.

"You don't have to have a 'Be nice to black people month.' Just include us in the standard. Let's do things together regularly. Get to know me, rather than knowing about me. Let me get to know you.

"We all can learn from each other," she said. "We're in spiritual warfare. Drugs and teen pregnancies are problems in every community. Satan likes to divide us over little things. We've got to fight this together. When we hurt, we don't care who puts salve on our wound."

George McCalep, pastor of Greenfor st Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga., said he believes "some hearts had already been changed" before the SBC meeting in June "for that resolution to be put on the floor and passed overwhelmingly like it was. We need to talk about what God has already done in his own way. We need to take time to savor the moment before we are too concerned about what happens next.

"Then we need to find out where God is and try to place ourselves there."

On a practical level, McCalep said he believes the convention needs "to come to an agreement on the underrepresentation of African Americans in Southern Baptist decision-making, and then we need a method that will address that representation.

"We need to identify what the African American population brings to the banquet table that is good," he continued, "and make some decision as to whether we want to eat off that table for a while. Black Southern Baptists have already chosen Sunday school from the banquet table. I feel the African American community brings good things to the table also."

He cited the long tenures of black pastors as a benefit to ministry and the emphasis on praise in black church worship services as two possible contributions.

Frankie Harvey of Emmanuel Baptist Church, San Jose, Calif., and a member of the California Southern Baptist Convention executive board, said she believes the spirit of the SBC resolution is that "we cannot say what our forefathers' thinking was, but we need to clear up some things and move forward."

The result of the resolution, she continued, will depend on what happens in the churches.

"When Anglo pastors see racism toward any ethnic person, they need to do some teaching. The same needs to happen in African American churches.

"We need to have more involvement of African Americans in Southern Baptist activities. Talk is cheap, but action has more fullness to it," the former California WMU president said.

"Reach out to us, and we'll reach back. God expects us to risk for him. African Americans shouldn't expect Anglos to do it all. We're part of a body. It is an opportunity for all churches in the SBC to show that God is love, and that is what we're about."

Black Church Leadership Conference was sponsored by Black Church Development of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Black Church Relations of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, Black Evangelism of the SBC Home Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

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House committee approves
partial-birth abortion ban

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
6/20/05

WASHINGTON (BP)--A House of Representatives Judiciary Committee divided along party lines has approved legislation banning a gruesome, late-term abortion procedure.

The committee sent to the full House by a 20-12 vote the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act (H.R. 1833) after contentious debate spread over two days. Despite Democrat attempts to weaken the bill, no Republican supported these amendments. In the end, all 20 Republicans on the committee supported the bill July 18.

"We are delighted that this legislation has passed handily," said James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "This is an important step on the road to regulating an especially abhorrent abortion method."

The procedure, named "partial-birth" by the bill's sponsors but commonly known as "dilation and extraction" (D and X), occurs in the second half of pregnancy. With ultrasound for guidance, an abortion doctor uses forceps and his hands to deliver a living, intact baby feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor thrusts surgical scissors into the base of the baby's skull. The doctor inserts a catheter into the opening and suctions out the brain. Because the skull collapses, this provides easier removal of the dead child.

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"This procedure is completely indefensible," said Rep. Charles Canady, R.-Fla., chief sponsor of the bill, in a written statement after the vote. "The partial-birth abortion takes the life of the baby while he or she is being born. The difference between a partial-birth abortion and homicide is a mere three inches."

Opponents of the bill accused supporters of interfering in medicine, trying to undermine abortion rights and providing inaccurate or deceptive information.

The bill is "one of the most extreme pieces of legislation since I got here," said Rep. Pat Schroeder, D.-Colo. What the committee is "doing here is really practicing medicine without a license."

The committee is interjecting itself into the practice of medicine "in the name of chipping away at Roe v. Wade," Schroeder said. "When I say it undoes Roe v. Wade, it does."

Roe v. Wade is the 1973 decision in which the Supreme Court ruled women have a constitutional right to abortion.

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D.-Texas, angrily called the bill an "atrociousness."

"This is the most outrageous legislation I have ever heard," she said.

Rep. Bob Inglis, R.-S.C., appeared especially to anger some Democrats when he said he could not believe they opposed this bill and he wondered if maybe their consciences had been "seared."

While it appeared at the start of consideration the Republicans would have enough support for final approval by the committee, there was some concern by pro-life organizations whether some GOP members would support two amendments which pro-lifers believed would render it meaningless.

Zoe Lofgren, D.-Calif., and Schroeder introduced amendments allowing the procedure to be done when necessary to preserve the mother's health.

If the woman's health is not included as an exception, "we have undone a very key part of Roe v. Wade," Schroeder said.

Without such an amendment, the effect would be to say to women, "You can have an abortion but don't have the safest procedure," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D.-N.Y. "How dare we?"

Such an amendment "would gut this bill totally," Canady said. It would "create an exception that would swallow the rule."

It would allow "any abortion in any circumstances," he said.

The Republicans' argument was based on how courts have treated the woman's health as an exception going back to the Supreme Court's 1973 opinion. In Doe v. Bolton, a companion case with Roe v. Wade, the court said health includes not only physical well-being but also mental, psychological, familial and age factors.

Chairman Henry Hyde, R.-Ill., said the exception is "so broad as to be totally meaningless." He also said the "tradeoff is not equal" -- life for health as opposed to life for life.

The Schroeder amendment failed 20-13. The similar amendment by Lofgren lost 19-12.

While opponents charged the bill's supporters were misleading in describing the procedure and the reasons for doing it, advocates for the legislation provided documentation quoting Ohio doctor Martin Haskell on the method. In a 1992 speech, Haskell said he had performed about 700 D and X abortions. He described the procedure in the speech and for a 1993 article in the American Medical News, a journal of the American Medical Association.

According to the article, Haskell said he performs the procedure until about 25 weeks of gestation. Another physician interviewed, James McMahon of Los Angeles, said he does abortions through all 40 weeks. Both said the majority of babies are alive until near the conclusion of the procedure. According to a transcript of the interview, Haskell said 80 percent of his D and X abortions "are purely elective."

Canady said after the vote he hopes for decisive approval on the House floor but is uncertain what will happen in the Senate. Sen. Robert Smith, R.-N.H., has introduced a similar bill (S. 939) on that side.

"We urge Southern Baptists to contact their representatives in the House and request their support for the bill," the CLC's Smith said. "We urge the House leadership to schedule the bill for consideration as soon as possible, hopefully before the August recess."

The House is scheduled to begin a month-long recess Aug. 5.

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CLC's Smith redeems time,
lobbies Clinton at reception

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
7/20/95

WASHINGTON (BP)--What do you say to the president of the United States if you only have a few moments of his time?

If you are James A. Smith of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, you ask him to weigh in on the pro-life side of abortion legislation being hotly debated the same day on Capitol Hill.

Smith's conversation with President Bill Clinton took place in a reception line following a recent speech at a northern Virginia high school. The White House had invited Smith, the CLC's director of government relations, to attend Clinton's speech on religious liberty. An invitation also was issued for the reception which followed.

As he reached Clinton in the line, Flo McAfee, associate director of the White House Office of Public Liaison, introduced Smith to the president, who is a member of a Southern Baptist church, and mentioned he worked with the Southern Baptist Convention. It was the first time Smith had met Clinton.

"I said, 'Mr. President, brother to brother, I appreciated your comments about religious liberty,'" Smith recounted. "'Fortunately, there's much that we agree about in that area. But I'd like to make you aware of the fact that the House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to vote today on the Partial-birth Abortion Ban. You know, D and X abortions.'

"By this point, he has a look of disbelief on his face, not shock, but he was obviously taken back. And I said, 'I know that you oppose late-term abortions, and this is mostly a procedure for late-term abortions. And so we're hoping that you can actually endorse this legislation.'

"He said, 'You know I signed a law in Arkansas banning third-trimester abortions.' And I said, 'I know that, and that's why we were hoping you will be able to endorse this legislation.'"

The president said he might take a look at the bill, Smith said.

"That sort of ended it," Smith said. "I started to step away, and he cleared his throat, and I thought at this point maybe he felt that he had overcommitted himself. So he cleared his throat and said, 'Now that's going to pass the House isn't it?'

"'Well, we hope so,' I said. 'We expect maybe even before the end of the month.'

"And he said, 'Who do you work with on my staff?' I said, 'I'm in communication with Flo McAfee,' who's standing beside him.

"And he said, 'Why don't you send us some stuff on this and, you know, if it gets up a head of steam and starts moving, then maybe we'll take a look at it.' And I said, 'We'd appreciate the opportunity to sit down and have a meeting with you to talk about this legislation.'"

Clinton repeated his request for some information, Smith said.

The discussion ended there for Smith but not for the president.

Aware of what Smith had discussed with Clinton, Andrea Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition followed him immediately in the line and also asked the president to support the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act. She told Clinton she wanted to make sure he understood the procedure.

"A baby is three inches from being constitutionally living," Sheldon said she told him. "The baby is delivered, so everything is outside of the mother except the head, and then the doctor takes a pair of scissors and jabs them into the baby's skull and then sucks out the brains. Surely, Mr. President, you don't support this?"

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By the time she spoke to Clinton, he responded calmly, Sheldon said.

"He didn't lose it," she said. "He kept that smile. He didn't miss a beat."

They were among about 150 people at the reception, Smith said.

"It was obvious that it was something that he was not prepared to hear," Smith said. "I believe it was obvious from his expression that he knew what we were talking about, because I think he is probably already concerned about how he is going to have to deal with it."

The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee recessed that day, July 12, without voting on final approval of the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act (H.R. 1833). Despite Democrat attempts to weaken and defeat the bill, all Republicans on the committee voted for it by a 20-12 margin along party lines July 18.

The day after the committee vote, Smith wrote the president and again asked for a meeting. He included a packet of information on the legislation, as requested by Clinton.

If the bill passes both the House of Representatives and Senate, Clinton will be confronted with a dilemma. The pro-choice lobby, which strongly supports the president, adamantly opposes the legislation. This is a type of procedure, however, which is done when many unborn children are able to survive outside the womb. Also, it is especially gruesome in its description.

The D and X (dilation and extraction) procedure takes place in the second half of pregnancy. With the help of ultrasound and forceps, the doctor delivers the unborn child feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. Suctioning the child's brain enables the head to decompress and provides for easier removal.

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SBC hunger gifts
drop for 1994

By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
7/20/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist giving to world hunger was down by almost \$1 million last year, from \$7.93 million in 1993 to \$6.96 million in 1994 -- more than a 12 percent decrease.

Reasons for the decline are difficult to assess, according to the Christian Life Commission's hunger consultant, C. Ben Mitchell.

"It's very hard to discover good reasons for the drop in giving," said Mitchell. "Giving to other SBC causes, including the Cooperative Program, were strong for the year. Yet giving for hunger was down across the board." Figures from the Home Mission and Foreign Mission Boards show giving for hunger was down in 25 of 40 state conventions.

According to Jim Foster, the FMB's human needs consultant, the drop in giving to hunger and relief threatens ministries to hungry people in the very near future. "At the current rate at which gifts are being received, and if projects are submitted in the same numbers as last year, the available funds will be completely depleted as early as January or February 1996.

"The only action that the FMB can pursue will be the implementation of a program of prioritization whereby only the most critical of projects will be funded. Many worthy projects will either be rejected, delayed or severely reduced in scope.

"The loser will be the poor, the hurting, the suffering peoples to whom our missionaries minister."

The reduction in giving has resulted in direct reductions in hunger ministry, according to Don Hammons, interim vice president of the HMB's ministry section. "The decrease in giving to the Home Mission Board's designated hunger funds resulted in our being unable to grant all of the requests for hunger funds received from the states," Hammons said.

Breakfast programs for school children, meals for the homeless, centers for unwed mothers, homeless shelters and meals for the elderly are examples of ministries supported through Home Mission Board hunger funds.

A number of factors have had a negative impact on hunger giving, said Mitchell. "Monies given directly to disaster relief instead of designated for hunger may have made some of the difference in 1994."

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According to Brotherhood Commission President James Williams, Elizabeth Dole of the American Red Cross has said 80 percent of the 8 million meals provided following U.S. disasters since 1990 were prepared by Southern Baptists.

Mitchell asserted, "But giving to these causes should not result in a decline in giving to hunger and relief. If Southern Baptists gave regularly and systematically to hunger needs, this kind of drop would not occur."

Changing trends in missions giving also may have contributed to the downturn, Mitchell said. "Many churches have consolidated their missions giving into an annual offering. They are, therefore, no longer receiving a world hunger offering. Hunger giving is simply neglected," he said.

While there is no single offering for world hunger, most Southern Baptists will observe World Hunger Day Oct. 8, 1995.

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Church economic development
enlarges ministry potential

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
7/20/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--George McCalep believes African American churches must pursue economic empowerment and he likes the concept of economic development found in Jeremiah 29.

"Build your own houses, plant your own gardens, take care of your own children and increase instead of decreasing," he paraphrases verses 4 through 6.

Economic development is not a means to build bigger barns in which to store money, said McCalep, pastor of Greenforest Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga. What he more often calls "economic empowerment," he said, is "the networking and synergizing of a people for the purpose of self-help and of creating initiatives, opportunities and advantages to minister holistically and bring to fruition abundant life."

McCalep said he wants to see the economic power of African American congregations channeled into providing more ministry opportunities, helping people to help themselves and helping the community in which it ministers.

"I'm not a CPA (certified public accountant), I'm a pastor," he told participants at the July 17-21 Black Church Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Individual stewardship, he stated, is the foundation of economic empowerment for churches.

"You don't have a right to say 'hallelujah' if you don't tithe," he said.

"That's shouting on credit," one conference participant observed.

McCalep laughed his approval and continued, "You cannot have an economically empowered church without effective stewardship of time, talent and money. At Greenforest, more than 600 families have committed to give more than 10 percent of their income to the church.

"The black church is much stronger than it gives itself credit for," he observed. "Our tradition is that 90 percent of charitable donations come through the church. The money is there. We can't complain about the impoverished community we're in. Many of our young people are driving expensive cars, wearing expensive clothes, going to college with part-time or no job to help support themselves."

McCalep said he would like to see church members put their resources into church auxiliaries and ministries to improve the community and help people on a practical level. Among the possibilities he cites are a church-owned senior citizens' housing facility, a credit union, bookstore, wellness center, print shop, dry cleaner, bakery, full food service, health services and thrift store. He envisions professionals who can donate services, as well as employment opportunities for people with the talents and skills needed to maintain those services.

McCalep is not a dreamer without action. He has led Greenforest Church from 25 members in 1979 to more than 3,000. The congregation owns a facility that includes a sanctuary, two separate classroom buildings, a family life building, ball field, picnic grounds and playground.

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In 1989 the Greenforest Christian Academy and Child Development Center was founded. Today, approximately 500 students are enrolled in the fully accredited school from preschool through 12th grade.

The possibilities for ministries he cited are a part of his vision for Mission City, a complex for housing senior citizens, child-care, education facilities and small businesses. Thus far, the Greenforest Community Development Corporation has been formed and an additional 61 acres surrounding the church have been purchased, including a 5.5-acre office park. The church now has 91 acres of land.

Among the possibilities he cited for the senior citizens housing is that residents might choose to offer or will their homes to the church in exchange for the opportunity to live in the complex. In turn, the church could offer affordable housing to young members of the congregation, among other options.

Greenforest takes tithing a step further by allocating 10 percent of its budget to benevolence needs. With a \$2.7 million budget, \$270,000 goes to meet practical needs such as rent or utilities for people in financial difficulty.

"At best we put Band-aids on problems," McCalep said. His preference is to help individuals know how to provide for themselves as a better long-term solution to economic needs.

He illustrated with the story of a used coat:

"Suppose you have a coat you want to give someone in need. You take the coat to the Family (thrift) Store, and the store sells it for money. The money comes back in the paycheck of a trainee working in the store.

"The trainee takes the money to the day care where his child is being cared for. The money comes back in the paycheck of the day-care worker.

"The day-care worker takes the money to the Home (thrift) Store to purchase donated furniture. The money comes back in the paycheck of the Home Store worker.

"The Home Store worker takes the money to pay his rent. The property management office takes the money to purchase a lot to build a home in the community.

"The money stays and circulates in the community."

Otherwise, he said, "Giving the coat away to one person has no further benefit."

McCalep noted the need for economically empowered churches that are role models for other churches.

"If we expect help," he said, "we need to help ourselves."

Black Church Leadership Conference is sponsored by black church development at the Baptist Sunday School Board, black church relations of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, black evangelism of the SBC Home Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union.

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Divergent scriptural views
voiced by multi-faith panel

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
7/20/95

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (BP)--Put a Roman Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, a representative from the National Council of Churches and a Southern Baptist seminary professor together -- and divergent views on the pressing social issues in the late 20th century are bound to emerge.

Yet a University of North Carolina symposium on religion and America's culture wars revealed distinctions to be sharpest among the four in their views of Scripture.

"We are under the Book, under the authority of the Bible as divinely inspired by God," said Daniel Heimbach, professor of ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., in representing conservative Protestantism.

It is not for mankind to mold God's Word to fit his desires, Heimbach said during the July 13 conference at the University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill campus. "It is our responsibility to shape ourselves to it."

"There is some material in the Bible which we simply do not regard as authoritative," countered Collins Kilburn, director of the North Carolina Council of Churches and a minister in the United Church of Christ.

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There is "biblical deadwood" which man is fit to prune, Kilburn said. "For those of us in the left wing of the Protestant family, parts of the Bible are terribly authoritative and other parts are not nearly so."

Father Phillip Leach, a Roman Catholic priest who serves at the Newman Center on the UNC campus, said Scripture is just one of many factors in making judgments of right and wrong at any given point in history.

"When the community of faith-filled persons comes together and reflects on divine revelation and those hints which God has left hidden in his creation, we can slowly and carefully discern God's will for our age," Leach said.

Much of the prohibitions and restrictions contained in the Hebrew scriptures are culturally bound, responded Steven Sager. Sager, rabbi at Beth-El synagogue, Durham, N.C., said much in Scripture is a "specific constraint in a specific time in a specific culture."

As an example, Sager said when the Bible refers to homosexual behavior as an "abomination" the term is suggesting a kind of cultural constraint.

"Things are not always as clear as they seem in Scripture," he continued. "If you were to take seriously everything the Bible calls an abomination and map that out as some would like to do with homosexuality ... there would be a lot of things we wouldn't be doing."

Many "liberal scholars" contend homosexual orientation was unknown to the writers of Scripture and so could not have been condemned by them, Kilburn said.

"While Scripture does refer to certain kinds of same-sex activity, the notion of homosexual behavior is a modern idea and conception," he said. The Scripture writers, he said, were referring to a domineering behavior warriors displayed toward conquered soldiers in celebration of a military victory.

Heimbach insisted the Bible is the normative moral standard:

"There isn't a moral framework behind the Bible that we can use to judge what in the Bible we like and what we don't. It is not ours to pick and chose.

"Moral standards are not inventions of human imagination or culture," Heimbach stated. They are enduring standards which are both transcendent and universal, he said.

While rejecting the idea that Scripture on the whole presents a definitive normative moral standard for mankind, Kilburn said there is still a transcendent norm: "It is the love of God located in the revelatory event of Christ."

Hinting that one's view of God determines one's stance on the authority of Scripture, Sager said God gets frazzled and frail and so "God needs people to keep him on an even track."

In opposing any notion there is anything but a transcendent standard and that it is revealed in God's Word, Heimbach said, "The question then is what does the Bible mean -- not what we can read into it or what we want it to mean -- but what does it mean. That is what should govern our life."

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CBF council approves plan to hire
seven field reps in eastern U.S. By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
7/20/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The coordinating council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has approved a plan to hire seven part-time "field representatives" in eastern states to promote the 4-year-old organization.

The unanimous vote of the 80-member board came during a July 19-20 meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, just prior to the CBF's fifth General Assembly meeting, July 20-22 at the Tarrant County Convention Center. CBF is an organization of moderate Southern Baptists, formed in 1991, critical of Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

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Also approved by the council, which acts on behalf of the CBF between its annual meetings: \$90,000 for eight regional conferences on evangelism, church and state relations, ministry to ministers and biblical interpretations; \$10,000 to Central Baptist Seminary, in the name of Molly Marshall, controversial former Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor who is now at Central; and removed a previously approved funding of \$7,000 for the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

The 18-month trial program to hire field representatives was brought by Cecil Sherman, CBF coordinator, the group's top staff official. Sherman said the representatives would all be from "east of the Mississippi River" and would not be full-time jobs. An allocation of \$105,000 was approved for the proposal.

Although the CBF hired a full-time field representative last year for the "west," Sherman said there were too many needs for people to speak on CBF's behalf in the eastern states for the current staff to handle. He told the council if the plan doesn't work it would be discontinued.

The eight regional conferences are to be coordinated by the CBF's Atlanta-based staff but in consultation with regional and state networks, Sherman said. Again, Sherman said if the conferences weren't effective, they would be discontinued.

The allocation to Central Baptist Seminary, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, USA, will be specifically for the renovation of the Minnie Sears Home for Missionaries at the small Kansas City-area school. The proposal said the contribution in Marshall's honor was for "her unwavering spirit in Christian education and her dedication to and support of the mission of the CBF."

Upon a request from the council's ethics and public policy ministry group, the council approved a request to remove funding from the budget for the peace fellowship organization in Memphis, Tenn. Joel Snider, a Nashville, Tenn., pastor and chairman of the ministry group, said there was a "lack of consensus" in the group for the peace fellowship's recent, and controversial, stance affirming some homosexual relationships.

In his report to the council, Sherman also praised the CBF's financial report for January through June. The report showed the CBF's receipts of \$6.4 million for that period exceeded the prior year's period of \$4.6 million. William G. Owen, of Ardmore, Okla., chairman of the finance ministry group, said the six-month budget for that period was \$5.9 million, making the receipts about \$500,000 above the budget. The CBF has now begun a new July 1 to June 30 fiscal year and will ask the General Assembly to approve a \$13 million 1995-96 budget, which includes \$3 million for their annual global missions offering.

Sherman also said searches were under way for three executives for the CBF's foundation, Baptist Principles Ministry Area and the Church Resources Ministry Area.

In other action, the council approved proposed bylaws changes to be submitted to the General Assembly; approved changing personnel policies which would conflict with the requirements of the Ministers and Missionaries Board of the American Baptist Churches regarding employee benefits (the ABC now administers the retirement and health plan of the CBF); and approved a plan to distribute funds received over and under the adopted budget and adopted budget funds not spent.

In what was described as "historic" for the organization, a plan was approved to establish \$9 million in reserves for the various ministries with interest on the monies to be distributed to a variety of causes.

"We have a two- to three-year window of opportunity while money is accumulating faster than missionaries are being appointed," said a rationale paper presented to the council. "This is a godsend! It enables us to establish some reserve funds to provide long range stability to our mission program. It also enables us to channel some needed resources to strengthen the whole of CBF."

The paper said the CBF expects 240-275 career missionaries and 1,500 short-term workers annually by the year 2,000. CBF will appoint 21 new missionaries at its General Assembly for a total of 71.

It was also announced at the council meeting, although not voted on, that a motion would be presented to the General Assembly for the "CBF to declare itself a denomination" by the 1996 meeting. Ironically, a criticism of the CBF by SBC leaders has been that the group refuses to acknowledge that it is a denomination, in competition with the SBC.

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Family expert notes 4 issues
threatening today's families

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/20/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--History has set the stage for the cast of characters who play the modern-day family, and it is up to Christian playwrights to determine whether the final story line of that long-lived production will be death or survival, a family therapist said.

Divorce, poverty, absentee fathers and America's television viewing habits are the four plots that "cry out for change" above all others, according to Stephen Sumerel, director of Family Life and Substance Abuse for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Sumerel presented a paper on "Family Trends: The Elements of Change" during a seminar at Discipleship and Family Development Week at Ridgecrest Conference Center, July 15-21. He determined the causes of some modern-day maladies of families may find their roots in history.

Sumerel chronicled the family from Old Testament/Hebrew roots through Roman, Greek and Christian cultures, and into the Dark Ages, the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution. He concluded by arriving at a snapshot of the modern family.

"Too many families live in poverty. Too many children have no father present in their lives. Too many marriages end in divorce, and too much violence and depersonalization have robbed us of our hope," Sumerel said.

However, he added, "I sense that families cannot be, nor should they seek to be, what they were in times past. On days when I experience families struggling with harsh realities and finding their own capacity for healing, I then marvel at the resiliency of the American family."

Some statistics Sumerel cited are:

-- In 1970, the number of currently divorced people was 4.3 million; by 1993, the number had escalated to 16.7 million.

-- In 1970, the number of unmarried couple households was a half million; by 1993, it had multiplied seven times to 3.5 million.

-- In 1970, the percentage of children under 18 living with one parent was 12; it had more than doubled by 1993 to 27 percent.

-- In 1947, 20 percent of married women worked outside the home; it had nearly tripled by 1991 to 59 percent.

-- On any given night, 40 percent of children go to sleep without a father in the home.

While divorces "have been increasing at a relatively steady rate for over 100 years, and while divorce rates in America have increased by 40 percent in the last 20 years," he said the number of divorces "seems to be leveling out."

"It appears the social, economic and cultural changes in our nation which made such an increase likely have now done all the damage they can do," he said.

Some factors which have contributed to divorce, Sumerel said, are:

-- an economy which has produced a need for both marriage partners to work outside the home.

Statistics show that marriages where women work 35 to 40 hours outside the home are four times more likely to end in separation or divorce than marriages where women work 20 or fewer hours, he said.

-- Increased financial independence of women, which gives them more freedom to leave unhappy marriages.

"Historically, the men have made the choice to leave. Now both men and women can choose to leave a marriage," Sumerel said.

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-- Laws which have mad divorce easier to achieve.

Divorce, Sumerel said, quite naturally leads to th phenomenon of absentee fathers.

"Twenty-seven percent or 18 million American children grow up in a single-parent home. Of these, only one out of eight is headed by a father."

Sumerel said he believes society sees fathers as "expendable."

However, children who grow up without fathers, Sumerel said, may experience developmental retardation. He speculated the violence of youth, "the only population group in which violent crime is increasing," is due in part to a void of father-child relationships.

Another alarming trend in today's family, Sumerel said, is the amount of time children and parents spend watching television.

He said researchers have found that, while the television set is on seven hours a day, mothers spend 12-15 minutes of undivided attention per day with their children and fathers spend approximately two to four minutes a day.

"Television viewing is the second most time-consuming activity in our nation. W only spend more time sleeping, and working comes in a close third. The common thread connecting each of these top three activities is that none of them invites interaction between members of a family.

"The amount of time spent in front of a common household appliance is nothing short of revolutionary," he said. "The average American child whose home is connected to cable will be exposed to 32,000 murders and 250,000 acts of violence. By the time a child reaches age 18, he or she will have encountered over 100,000 commercials for alcoholic beverages."

Sumerel suggested parents spend less time trying to ban certain television programming and more time with their children talking and playing.

Poverty is another haunting trend in American society targeted by Sumerel, who says the percentage of children living below the poverty line with only their mother is 54 percent.

"In 1993, 15.7 million children lived in families whose income was below the poverty line. Right now, one-fourth of our nation's homeless are children."

Without shelter, Sumerel said, children become "developmentally arrested. One does not generally move to the next level of development when the foundational levels have not been established."

Sumerel suggested churches look at these trends and determine how to become motivated by them.

"Our faith informs us not to treat the family as a victim of our society, but to work to empower the family to become an agent of change. This is our call to minister to the family. As we encounter families in pain, we are able to hear it as a call to action."

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A list of family life resources, filename "family.txt," has been posted in the SBCNet News Room by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Sumerel traces roots
of family problems

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
7/20/95

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Some of the problems families face in the 1990s have roots in history, according to Stephen Sumerel, director of Family Life and Substance Abuse for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

During a seminar at Discipleship and Family Development Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, July 15-21, h presented a paper, "Family Trends: The Elements of Change," chronicling the family from Old Testament times through mod rn day.

Am ng his observations:

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-- The Old Testament or Hebrew family structure was stable. Sexual misconduct was a sin, but more because it would jeopardize pure Hebrew bloodlines. The power of women was nonexistent. Large families were needed for family work, and women provided "the garden in which the (male's) seed was to be planted." Concubines were a part of the family structure, and fathers were financially tied to the children of their

concubines. Hebrew men were able to divorce their wives for reasons of adultery and incompatibility, but the most frequent reason for divorce was infertility.

-- Romans were much more monogamous than Hebrews because children of their concubines were not considered male heirs. As a result, Romans had more liberal divorce laws. Roman men could divorce their wives for: adultery, making poison, drinking wine and counterfeiting house keys.

-- In Greek families, the level of women reached an all-time low. Wives were for children; concubines were for enjoyment and love. The attitudes toward concubines and any children they bore paralleled the advent of today's plight of absentee fathers, Sumerel recounted.

-- The Christian family was a mixture of Hebrew, Greek and Roman family structures. The family was still ruled by the father, but women, while not equal in power in families, were elevated in the sight of God.

-- In the Dark Ages, people began working outside the family structure to make their money. "That's when we began seeing a decentralizing role of family which we are really feeling the result of these days," Sumerel said.

-- During the Renaissance, commerce became increasingly focused outside the home. Large families were less attractive. And the nuclear family began emerging. "A case can be made that in the Renaissance the modern family was finally taking on embryonic form," Sumerel said.

-- In Early American families, women developed more power. They did far more than tend to domestic duties. They were very visible in the commerce of the emerging nation. Sexual immorality was punished with scarlet letters and public humiliation. However, scholars have found that premarital sexual behavior was still experienced by about one-third of those who eventually got married.

-- In the industrialization and modernization era, the economy of the family was completely outside the individual family unit. With the advent of factories, men, women and children become more remote from each other. As men left home, the role of child rearing fell exclusively to women. Adolescent males gained their education outside the paternal relationship.

"This development may well be at the root of what was to become a major trend of our society today -- the fatherless family," Sumerel said.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following comments about the nation's crime problem were voiced by Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, in a news conference prior to his address to the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in Atlanta.

FIRST-PERSON

Colson: Nation's crime problem
beyond institutions' resources

By Charles Colson

Baptist Press
7/20/95

ATLANTA (BP)--We're at a moment in American life where our liberties are at stake. Not so much religious liberties, although they're certainly under assault. But our liberties as a free people ... because crime and fear have become so pervasive in American life that Americans will make the Faustian bargain ... that people in every society have made through the centuries -- and that is, when you're overcome with fear, you will trade your liberties for order.

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In 20 years of prison ministry, in 69 countries, with 50,000 volunteers in America, visiting the homes of 430,000 kids last Christmas with Angel Tree gifts, I think we probably know the mentality of the people in prison and the subculture which produces most of the crime in America about as well as any group possibly could. We've lived among them.

I've watched over 20 years an incredible coarsening in American culture, a dulling of the conscience, a loss of moral sensitivities and moral training, a weakening and a breakdown of character in American life. These kids that are coming off the streets today are different -- completely different -- from the kids 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago.

The crime problem is largely a juvenile problem. If you took the juvenile crime rate out of the American crime rate, if you took the inner-city crime rate out of the American crime rate, you'd have about the same crime rate as Belgium.

But the complete collapse of the inner-city cultures and the complete collapse of the family structure among large segments of our population has created a crisis of character that really threatens to overwhelm us. I think the moral collapse at the center of American life has overwhelmed the capacity of our institutions to respond. And that's why we're building prisons faster and faster and faster and faster, and the crime rate keeps going up. It's gone up 560 percent since the 1960s.

But it's the character of crime that really has American people frightened to death -- and rightly so, because these kids are committing crimes without any remorse, without any reason, without any motive, without any purpose. ... (Their) conscience has never been cultivated.

I was in a prison in Indiana and it was probably the toughest place I've been in the last 10 years, maybe since Angola or Statesville or Walla Walla. This was Michigan City, Ind. I've been there five times. And the guys were looking at me -- these kids, 19, 20, 21 -- with the hardest eyes. ... There was literally apartheid -- the black inmates were over here and the white inmates were over here. When (former Chicago Bears linebacker) Mike Singletary spoke, the black inmates responded. When I spoke, the white inmates responded.

When it was over, I turned to Chuck Adkins, the assistant warden who's been there for 20 years. I said, "Chuck, has this place changed?" I'd been there five times. I said, "It sure feels like a different place to me."

He said, "Changed? Ten years ago, I could talk to these kids about right and wrong. Today, I talk to them and they have no idea what I'm talking about." He said, "The biggest administrative problem I have in this prison is, the older inmates ask for protection from the younger inmates coming in off the streets." And that's the population group in America that's growing the fastest.

Now, ... we've reached the point of saturation, and the moral problem has overwhelmed the institutions' ability to respond. That's true. There simply is no institutional response to the juvenile crime problem We don't have one. And I talk to corrections people all across America, and they tell me ... there's not a thing we can do.

And we as a church aren't there, taking the one thing that will make a difference -- the life-changing power of Jesus Christ to those inmates in prison and particularly to their families and particularly to those kids that are coming out on the street.

And I fear, I tremble, I shudder at what will happen to American culture.

HOUSE MAIL

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