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EDITORS' NOTE: Additional reaction to a proposed shift in Texas Baptist funding of Southern Baptist causes will appear in (BP) Thurs., Aug. 24.

Reactions to Texas CP proposal
include conservative's 'no'

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
8/23/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The leader of a key Texas Baptist conservative organization has urged "a resounding 'NO!'" to a proposed 2.5 percent shift in the state's funding of Southern Baptist Convention national and international missions and ministries in order for the Baptist General Convention of Texas to start 1,400 new churches in the next five years.

Miles Seaborn, president of Southern Baptists of Texas and pastor of Birchman Baptist Church, Fort Worth, described the proposal by a Baptist General Convention of Texas study committee -- which would reduce gifts to SBC causes an estimated \$1.5 million annually -- as "a different teaching" from Baptist tradition.

"All our lives we have been taught, coached and led to 'lift up our eyes' beginning here to the ends of the earth and give for the salvation of all man," Seaborn said.

There is a better way, offered Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

"Rather than allocate money away from world missions, we need to challenge Texas churches to give another half percent to the Cooperative Program," Hemphill said. "There is a way to do both."

Under the proposed funding shift, the percentage of Cooperative Program gifts for Southern Baptist causes would decrease from the current 35.5 percent to 33 percent in the 1996 budget proposal, while Texas Baptist funding would increase from the current 64.5 percent to 67 percent. The shift, proposed by the BGCT/Home Mission Board Study Committee and approved by the BGCT administrative committee, will be voted on by the BGCT executive board Sept. 12 and, finally, by the BGCT annual meeting, Nov. 13-14 in San Antonio.

Under the SBC's Cooperative Program budget, half of all gifts received are forwarded to the Foreign Mission Board, one-fifth to the HMB and the rest to other SBC causes. Thus, a \$1.5 million reduction in Texas annual giving to the SBC would reduce Foreign Mission Board funds by \$750,000 and Home Mission Board funds by \$300,000.

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Said Hemphill: "Every agency is facing greater needs, but I feel the challenge is to give even more sacrificially at every level, rather than increase funding by reallocation."

Hemphill said he is not assuming the proposal will be approved. "Texas Baptists have a global vision. They don't want to see Southwestern and other institutions penalized to reach the state."

The impact on Southwestern in the 1996-97 fiscal year would be \$87,900, Hemphill said; if the cut becomes effective in January 1996, the seminary would receive \$51,245 less in the current fiscal year.

Although it would create a challenge, Hemphill said, "we're confident our God will supply all our needs according to his riches and glory."

"Many Texas Baptists have been generous to us," Hemphill said. "We're committed to helping Texas Baptists reach all of Texas, but on a larger scale, we are committed to helping Southern Baptists reach our nation and world for Christ."

Said Seaborn: "Should this action pass, I will do all I possibly can to send more and more of our mission funds directly to the SBC programs to reach the world for Jesus." According to the pastor, "more funds will be lost to Texas needs as churches divert more of their giving to SBC causes and away from a shortsighted withholding of funds to stay here in Texas."

Numerous BGCT officials, meanwhile, voiced support for the proposed shift in Texas CP funding.

"With great inward pain and reluctance I voted for this recommendation," said D.L. Lowrie, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lubbock, and chairman of the Baptist General Convention of Texas Strategy Committee in 1994 that recommended the "Texas 2000" plan for reaching every person in the state with the gospel by the year 2000.

Lowrie also is the former director of BGCT state missions commission, a former BGCT president and former executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. He described the proposed redirection of CP funds as "a reasonable response to the overwhelming spiritual need in the cities of Texas, a logical step following the action of the SBC which encouraged the stronger states to accept responsibility for their needs without dependence upon the Home Mission Board, and a move that will ultimately result in greater resources for world missions as new churches are begun."

"If someone has a better idea about meeting the needs in Texas," Lowrie said, "I would be delighted to hear it and support it."

"Starting new churches takes money," said Jerold McBride, BGCT president and pastor of First Baptist Church, San Angelo. "But the bottom line is that more churches will mean an increase in dollars going to home and foreign missions. We don't start churches to raise offerings, but as we expand our mission base and Christian stewardship develops, it will mean an increase in giving for all missions causes."

Mary Humpries of San Marcos, Woman's Missionary Union of Texas president and a foreign missionary with her husband in Vietnam from 1966-1973, said, "The needs of Texas are so great and we are losing ground every day in spite of extraordinary efforts to start churches and share the gospel. ... We must strengthen our mission efforts in Texas even to remain the strong mission state which we have always been."

William M. Pinson Jr., BGCT executive director, said, "The recommendation of the administrative committee was reached only after careful study and much prayer. I observed the members evaluate options, agonize over choices and keep always before them the love of Jesus for a lost world. Above all they clearly desired to find and follow God's will. Their proposal is based not only on extensive information but also on deep conviction about how to best reach a world with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Baptist way is now for others to consider to recommendation and the basis for it in prayerful, thoughtful deliberation and then vote according to their sense of the Holy Spirit's leading and God's will."

However, for Ronnie Floyd, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., the proposed Texas action already evokes disappointment "to think the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas would even consider cutting its support of national and international Southern Baptist causes. Even though I commend them for their position to reach the growing diverse population of Texas through starting new churches, I believe they could consider other ways to accomplish this goal without sacrificing financial support for missions around the world. It is difficult to believe that grassroots Southern Baptists would see the decreasing of 35.5 percent to 33 percent for the Southern Baptist Convention causes as a step forward in joining the entire Southern Baptist Convention in reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

"This move," Floyd said, "is an extreme departure from the historic tradition of cooperation in worldwide mission support that the Baptist General Convention of Texas has had for years with the Southern Baptist Convention."

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Calvinism versus Arminianism
is empty argument, Vines says

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
8/23/95

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Facing the debate between those who call themselves Calvinists and Arminians head on, Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., cautioned it is easy for a believer's personal theology to become man-centered instead of God-centered.

He warned the students, gathered for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's fall convocation service, it is possible to seemingly be educated beyond one's own intelligence -- "absolutely smarter than God."

Vines, a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, asked Aug. 22, "Are you a Calvinist or are you an Arminian?"

Then responding to his own query, he said: "If you are either, you are a religious humanist because that is a man-centered theology instead of a God-centered theology. I could care less what Calvin believed and I could care less what Arminius believed -- I want to know what the revealed Word of God has to say."

Saying he enjoyed his seminary experience, Vines fondly recalled times when he and other students would gather together informally to talk about matters of the logy.

Smiling broadly, Vines asked the students gathered in Southeastern's Binkley Chapel: "Do they still have Calvinism and Arminianism? Is that still around?"

"Boy, we had that stuff when I was in seminary," said Vines, recalling the discussions centering on divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

"One night in one of those sessions I absolutely reconciled sovereignty and human responsibility," he continued, teasing the Wake Forest, N.C., worshipers by admitting, "I forgot how I did it, but I had it that night."

To those who ask how do you reconcile sovereignty, Vines said, "The Bible teaches divine sovereignty." And to those who ask how you reconcile human responsibility, he continued, "The Bible teaches human responsibility.

"I don't worry about reconciling them. I just preach them and God takes care of the reconciliation," Vines announced amidst cheers from the packed chapel crowd. There is a lost and dying world out there and it is not impressed with such theological discussions, he said.

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**Vines admonishes seminarians
to be wary of worldly spoils**

By Dwayne Hastings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Students had better not be in the ministry simply for "some silver, a suit and a meal ticket," Jerry Vines warned during convocation services marking the opening of fall classes at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southeastern Baptist Theological College.

Looking to the 17th chapter of the Book of Judges, Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., said this Scripture spoke of a time in which every man did that which was right in his own eyes, including the nation's religious leaders. "We too are living in a day when people have replaced the authority of God with the opinions of man," he said.

Judges is the book in which God tells of the Israelites' compromise with the pagan Canaanite culture, Vines said, noting it is tragically similar to what is taking place in contemporary American church life.

"God intends his people to be thermostats changing the temperature of the times; we are rapidly becoming thermometers merely reflecting the temperature of the times," Vines said Aug. 22 on Southeastern's Wake Forest, N.C., campus.

The young priest, Jonathan, introduced in the book of Judges was not content with the provision God had made for him, Vines said. "Jonathan is a warning to us of what can happen to a young man whose ministry begins to rest on faulty premises ... when we succumb to religious materialism."

A lot of preachers "have their price," suggested Vines. "There are many preachers who have dollar signs in their eyes. There are a lot of preachers who have cash registers for hands. A lot of preachers are in the ministry for what they think they'll get out of it."

Saying it was his prayer that none of the students would ever be a preacher who is for sale or who ministers to the highest bidder, Vines challenged them "to put a 'Not-for-Sale' sign on their heart" and to be in the ministry for the right reasons.

Vines said he was heartened that preachers are paid better today than they used to be: "The first church I ever got as an 18 year-old boy they paid me \$37.50 a week and some of them grumbled it was too much. And looking back at some of my sermons, I tend to agree with them."

God takes care of material needs if preachers will allow him, Vines said. "Don't put your ministry on a monetary basis," admonished Vines, recalling advice his father had given him. "Be a man of God, don't you be a religious beggar. Don't you go running around with your hand out ..."

Dean of the faculty L. Russ Bush announced Paul Carlisle was the recipient of this year's Excellence in Teaching award. Carlisle, assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at Southeastern, was recognized both for his concern for students and his classroom teaching.

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**Healthy eating, exercise listed
as vital for effective ministry**

By Chip Alford

**Baptist Press
8/23/95**

GLORIETA, N.M.--(BP) If the cliché "you are what you eat" is true, a lot of Baptist ministers may be in trouble.

With church suppers of fried chicken and home-baked pies and fast-food lunches common among those constantly on the go, it's not surprising ministers and church workers are one of the groups most at risk for high blood pressure, heart attacks and depression, a Baptist Sunday School Board consultant said.

John Garner, pastor/staff growth consultant and projects coordinator at the BSSB, led an Aug. 22 seminar on nutrition during Small Sunday School Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

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"In too many of our churches, people are dying younger of heart attacks, strokes and cancer," Garner said. "Others are sleepy and fatigued all the time or depressed. It's affecting their interpersonal relationships, and among pastors and church workers, it's affecting their ministry.

"It's fabulous, unbelievable, what God has done in creating our physical bodies," Garner said. "We have a responsibility to take care of them. ... Our objective ought to be to serve God as well as we can as long as we can."

Garner shared eight common complaints which prevent people from starting a healthy eating and exercise program and he responded to each:

- 1) "I tried it once, but it didn't work for me." (It's never too late to try again.)
- 2) "It's too hard." (It's never going to get any easier.)
- 3) "It takes too much time." (It doesn't have to. A two-mile walk in 30 minutes three times a week can make a significant impact on your health. Look for simple ways to get a little extra exercise, such as parking further away from the door at the grocery store or taking the stairs instead of the elevator.)
- 4) "I can't afford it." (It could cost as little as a good pair of walking shoes.)
- 5) "I feel self-conscious." (Is that worse than feeling bad or becoming ill?)
- 6) "I lack support from family and friends." (Don't let others dictate your actions when your physical health is at stake.)
- 7) "I'm too tired to exercise." (Exercise will energize you.)
- 8) "I'm too old to start." (You're never too old to begin reaping the benefits of healthy eating and exercise.)

Healthy eating, Garner said, can involve steps as simple as eating more fruits, vegetables, cereals and other high-fiber foods and consuming fewer foods with a high content of fat, sugar and salt.

He also offered the following suggestions for a healthy diet:

- "Wait a while before you go back for seconds. Give our stomach a chance to 're-cord' what you've already eaten."
- "Eat a healthy breakfast. This gets your metabolism going and gets your day off on the right foot."
- "Stretch the amount of meat you eat. Eat more poultry and fish."
- "Avoid nutritional 'cures' or 'dramatics.' They won't work."
- "Drink six to eight glasses of water a day."
- "Go for a walk."
- "Figure out your fat gram consumption."
- "Forget dieting to lose weight quickly."
- "Don't eat too close to bedtime."
- "Eat slowly."
- "Eat whatever you want, but eat wisely. The key is balance. As Scripture tells us, do everything in moderation."

Garner also encouraged conference-goers to learn all they can about nutrition, exercise and healthy eating. He suggested as a resource the workbook, "Nutrition for God's Temple," by Richard Couey, professor of nutrition and fitness at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

The book, published by the BSSB's LifeWay Press, is available at Baptist Book Stores and can also be ordered direct from the BSSB customer service center at 1-800-458-2772.

Small Sunday School Conference is sponsored by the BSSB's Bible teaching-reaching division.

**Velcro-ize your Sunday school
to reach prospects, minister says By Chip Alford**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--When it comes to relating to prospects, Sunday school classes are either like velcro or teflon.

"Class members play one of the greatest roles in determining whether prospects will stay around. If we're like velcro, we make things stick to us, but if we're like teflon, things slide away," Keith Lowry explained during an Aug. 22 Small Sunday School Conference seminar at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Lowry, minister of education at First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, La., said the main reason classes remain like teflon instead of velcro is "they don't have a plan for making visitors feel welcome so they'll want to come back."

He and others attending the seminar shared several tips for "velcro-izing" your Sunday school, such as:

- making name tags for everyone, not just guests.
- having established greeting and welcome procedures and people in charge of carrying them out.
- developing a buddy system where a "greeter" stays with guests to make sure they are introduced to others and answer any questions they might have.
- making sure guests are invited to worship and have someone to sit with.
- inviting guests out to lunch and/or upcoming fellowships.
- having class members stand during the first part of class so guests won't feel they're the center of attention when they walk in the door.
- identifying any needs the guests may have in looking for ministry opportunities.
- leaving a note and/or flower on guests' car windshield before they leave.
- bringing to their home (after their visit) information about your church along with a loaf of bread, a fresh baked pie or flowers.
- introducing them to the pastor and other church leaders.
- offering refreshments.

Lowry said it is also important for class members to remember not everyone has the same comfort zone when it comes to meeting and greeting strangers.

"People have all different kinds of personalities and we have to respect that. That's why it is good to have people as greeters who have the gift of hospitality and discernment. They can tailor (the welcome) to the person."

Building relationships is the key to turning prospects into members, Lowry said, adding "that doesn't happen in a worship service. It happens through one-on-one relationships."

Lowry also identified some "teflon things" Sunday school classes must avoid, such as:

- forming exclusive cliques.
- failing to make a follow-up visit to a prospect who has visited your class.
- assuming guests can fend for themselves after they arrive.
- embarrassing them by making them stand up and introduce themselves.
- failing to be there early in case a guest arrives before class starts.
- assuming they know the class routine.
- asking personal questions, such as age.
- involving them in too much, too soon.

"Just be friendly; that's the important thing," he said. "Do everything you can to make them feel as comfortable and welcome as possible."

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