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**First issue of ABP
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NASHVILLE (ABP) — The first edition of Associated Baptist Press was released Sept. 26, 1990.

ABP is a new news service designed to cover the events of Baptists around the world. Initially, it will be circulated—primarily by FAX—to about 50 outlets, including state Southern Baptist newspapers, secular newspapers and others.

ABP will use state Baptist newspapers, secular religion specialists and others to provide news accounts. In some occasions, the stories will be used and credited to the reporter; in others, several accounts will be compiled into one story. In other circumstances, ABP will provide on-the-scene coverage.

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**Southern trustees set
new faculty guidelines**

ABP
9/26/90

by Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP)—Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees have adopted the 1987 Peace Committee report as a guideline for hiring, promoting and granting tenure to seminary faculty.

The Peace Committee report declares that “most Southern Baptists believe” people who say the Bible is true believe that “Adam and Eve were real persons,” “named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them,” miracles “did indeed occur as supernatural events in history” and “the historical narratives given by biblical authors are indeed accurate and reliable.”

Southern’s board meeting had been called Sept 24-25 to deal with the conduct and concerns of trustee Jerry Johnson, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Aurora, Colo.

Last spring, Johnson distributed a 16-page document, “The Cover-up at Southern Seminary,” which was critical of seminary President Roy Honeycutt and five faculty members.

Trustees received the document at their April meeting, but deferred “the Jerry Johnson matter” to September. Subsequently, faculty called for his resignation. A motion demanding his removal was presented to the SBC annual meeting this summer and referred to seminary trustees.

The trustees, who met in closed session for about five hours, decided to treat Johnson’s conduct and concerns as two matters.

Their statement on his conduct noted they “accept Jerry Johnson’s apology and forgive him and ... affirm him as a member of the board with the hope that this will be the first step in the healing process, not only within this board but in the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole.” It was approved with four dissenting votes.

Johnson’s letter of apology notes some language in his document “was ill-chosen and too harsh” and concedes that he did not follow proper trustee procedure for expressing concerns.

“I caused unnecessary sorrow for many,” the letter says. “I deeply regret this and wish to apologize at this time.”

It adds, "Under no circumstances should this statement be construed to mean that the issues I addressed have ceased to be concerns in my mind and heart."

Those concerns were addressed by a second trustee recommendation, which was approved 36-14.

The first part of that recommendation declares "that the action of the 1986 board of trustees concerning the trustee report to the SBC Peace Committee not be revisited."

Almost all of Johnson's document deals with matters that were raised by an investigative subcommittee of the Peace Committee and handled by seminary trustees at the time.

Trustee Vice Chair Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarwood Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and moderator of the meeting, told reporters that trustees had "drawn a line" regarding the old matters and do not intend to consider them again.

The second part of the recommendation deals with the future. It says, "In addition to existing guidelines, the Peace Committee report — both findings and recommendations — serve as a guideline for the employment of temporary and permanent faculty, the promotion of existing faculty and the granting of tenure."

The four illustrations of biblical belief are included in the Peace Committee report's "findings" section. The "recommendations" section calls upon SBC institutions "to build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large."

"This is an instrument for the administration to use. It's for dealing with the future," Allen said. "We're not going to the faculty to say, 'Do you agree with the Peace Committee?'"

However, the new policy calls for use of the Peace Committee report when considering faculty promotion and tenure. For example, an assistant professor now on the faculty apparently would be questioned about the document when being considered for promotion to associate professor.

The trustees' action reflects a step toward peace and harmony, Allen said. It also should provide security for faculty by closing the books on past action and "establishing parameters" for future action, he added, noting he expects changes on the faculty to come through attrition, not firings.

Bill J. Leonard, professor of church history and president of the SBTS Faculty Association said, "The trustee action in effect establishes a new creedalism at Southern Seminary that is the result of the Peace Committee action."

"I remember poignantly when Charles Fuller (chairman of the Peace Committee) said this document would never be used as a creed. Charles Fuller's statement is proved absolutely false."

"The overlay of the new guidelines bodes ill for the future," Leonard said: "This is for the moment — these specific statements are required. But given the change, we don't know what it will be next year."

The seminary's acting president, Willis Bennett, said the trustees' action provided "much cause for encouragement and continuing cause for concern."

"We have officially taken positions that will put some things behind us and allow us to move forward in a more productive manner without quite the kind of suspicion that has been existing for some considerable time," he said.

"I have no difficulty working with the ... report. We will promise them our cooperation and try to implement the policies they have now put in place."

"The intent of the trustees is to secure what they perceive as more representative personnel. They are not asking for radicals.

"The seminary already has moved in the direction of recruiting more conservative faculty members," Bennett said. He cited the presence of conservatives from 10 schools on the campus as visiting professor in the past three years.

Trustee Johnson's 16-page criticism of Honeycutt and the faculty members is "a dead document as far as the seminary is concerned," Bennett said, citing the trustees' decision not to re-enter the cases.

Ten trustees also filed a minority report concerning the Johnson matter.

Julian Pentecost, editor of Virginia Baptists' Religious Herald newspaper, presented the four-point minority report.

The minority asked that trustees' deliberations be conducted in open session, he said, noting closed meetings depart from Baptists' heritage and tradition. "We deeply regret the cover of darkness used for anonymity," he noted.

Second, the minority wanted to separate the trustees' action on not opening past grievances with the faculty from trustees' consideration of future hiring, promotion and tenure decisions.

Third, they decried some trustees' repeated attempts to deal with past actions of faculty, noting those questions have been "already answered."

Fourth, the minority expressed concern about adding the Peace Committee report to the other faculty guidelines. Faculty have operated under the seminary's Abstract of Principles since the founders wrote it in 1859. For three years, they formally have affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

"We have been a free people," Pentecost said. "Where I come from, people were imprisoned ... for the crime of insisting on their freedom. So we're deeply disturbed about what has happened and the repetitious nature, that it continues to happen."

Trustee Ron Meredith, a federal judge from Louisville, moved that Pentecost be removed from the board, noting Pentecost had disclosed some actions of the private meeting. Chair Sam H. McMahon Jr., a businessman from Charlotte, N.C., ruled the motion out of order.

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(Marv Knox is editor of the (Kentucky) Western Recorder.)

(More)

ABP 90-1 (continued)
9/26/90**WMU affirms CP, alternatives;
hears from missions leaders**

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) — The Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union has affirmed the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified giving plan, while at the same time supporting the right of churches and individuals to use alternative mission funding plans.

National leaders of the WMU, auxiliary to the SBC, spent nine hours Sept 21-22 in called session in Richmond, Va., addressing the controversy which has brought divisiveness to the SBC. The meeting marked the first time the national WMU has spoken to the 12-year political-theological controversy.

The national leadership called the unusual two-day meeting to discuss the organization's response to recent decisions by some SBC churches and state conventions to reduce or eliminate contributions to the Cooperative Program, which funds the 20 national agencies of the SBC.

At the end of the meeting, the state WMU presidents and executive directors unanimously adopted a statement which included messages to home and foreign missionaries, WMU members and WMU critics.

While it dealt with supporting both traditional and alternate funding methods, the statement did not reflect the full range of issues and questions the leaders discussed during the dialogue, reports from Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Board presidents and other sessions.

Both FMB President R. Keith Parks and HMB President Larry Lewis addressed the group at the beginning of its deliberations.

The issues — considered "so that we'll be ready" for what happens in the SBC — ranged from missions funding to the possibility of serving a split constituency, to the possibility of becoming a missionary-sending agency, to the potential of having to align with one convention or another should a new convention be formed.

Other than the statement, leaders did not reach consensus on all the issues discussed. "We have many questions, and few answers," one said.

WMU's statement notes its effort "to remain steadfast in our missions mandate" and acknowledges it has "remained silent by choice during the strategic junctures of denominational history."

"But now, individual churches are withdrawing or drastically reducing their contributions through the Cooperative Program. Several state conventions are considering plans ... as an alternative to the cooperative method of supporting missions, education and evangelistic efforts."

In addition to affirming the Cooperative Program, the WMU statement also affirmed traditional channels of missions giving, including the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions. The WMU annually promotes the two offerings, which provide large parts of the budgets of the two missions agencies.

The WMU statement addresses three audiences. Missionaries were told "we will continue to love you and support you." The 1.2 million WMU members were urged to "pray with us like you've never prayed before."

Speaking to the critics, the statement expresses regret "that our silence over the years might have been construed as consent or even support of the controversy. We further regret any suspicions that WMU might be politically involved in the denominational strife."

"We have hoped and prayed that eventually problems in our denomination would be worked out so that we could keep our sights on missions. We are grieved and gravely concerned over the negative impact of the controversy on missions."

WMU's statement comes on the heels of similar resolutions approved by the boards of several SBC agencies. However, while the denomination's Executive Committee, Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and Radio-Television Commission affirmed the Cooperative Program, they specifically opposed alternative funding methods.

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of WMU, acknowledged the statement is "broader" than the agencies' resolutions. But she told a news conference following the meeting: "We have been very careful not to affirm a specific alternate plan. We have affirmed giving to missions through other plans. We don't think it's our right to tell a church how it gives."

Since the 1990 annual meeting of the SBC, when fundamental-conservatives won their 12th victory, dissatisfied moderate-conservatives have proposed a number of giving plans to bypass the Executive Committee, which recommends the annual SBC budget.

In August, at a meeting of about 3,000 moderate-conservatives in Atlanta, Ga., a new funding mechanism for churches was announced. Two state conventions — North Carolina and Virginia — are considering revised budgeting procedures and an unspecified number of churches reportedly are considering supporting these plans or developing their own programs of designated giving.

In the news conference, O'Brien, a former missionary to Indonesia, said: "This may be seen as our entry into the denominational controversy. But it's really our attempt to deal with the reality of missions giving. It's not a desire to be involved in the controversy in any way. We want to be sure churches of all persuasions can contribute to Southern Baptist missions."

In presentations to the called meeting Parks and Lewis agreed the Cooperative Program is the best channel for missions giving, but disagreed over how much legitimacy to grant alternative funding plans.

"Certainly I concur that our Cooperative Program is the preferable plan," Parks said. "But the question I am asking is, 'Will it remain intact?' Never in my experience has that question been as frequently asked and frequently discussed than in the last few months."

Lewis agreed the Cooperative Program "is the preferred method of missions support," but said that while he accepts the right of local churches to decide how to distribute missions gifts, he warned if leaders "tip their hat" to alternative giving plans "we're opening Pandora's box" and contributing to the "unraveling of our convention."

"We (the HMB) oppose all alternative plans. We grant the right for churches to choose them, but we do oppose them," he added.

Parks warned that unless "trust and inclusiveness" are recreated in the SBC, churches "will find another way" to support missions. "Those who have leadership now (in the SBC) are the ones who will have to reach out and recreate trust," he said.

He added that while he supports the cooperative way, it must be voluntary and not coerced. "A cooperative plan... is not a coerced plan, and if the SBC insists on one way of funding missions, many churches say they'll pull out entirely.

"I don't want multi-giving patterns," Parks said, but added, "We are in desperate times if those who are most supportive of the Cooperative Program are giving the least and those who are most unhappy with it are giving the most."

Lewis said HMB trustees fear that alternative funding plans "will increase division and polarization even more" in an already tense SBC. "We don't need another issue to drive us apart."

He also questioned the rationale of those proposing alternative plans. "It is a false assumption that anyone not in the Patterson-Pressler coalition has not been put in positions of leadership," he said referring to the architects of the fundamental-conservative movement, Dallas educator Paige Patterson and Houston judge Paul Pressler.

While he acknowledged SBC boards now reflect "a strong conservative, inerrantist character, that doesn't mean boards have been incompetent."

"There are some (trustees) who one wonders how they were elected to that position," he conceded, "but even the nuts are screwed to the right bolts in terms of their dedication to missions."

**Baylor changes charter
to create regents board**ABP
9/26/90

WACO, Texas (ABP) — Moving to free the school from the perceived threat of a fundamental-conservative takeover, Baylor University trustees voted Sept. 21, to change its charter to put distance between the university and control of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

By a vote of 30-7 with one abstention, trustees voted to change the university charter to replace the current 48-member board of trustees with a 24-member board of regents which will have "sole governance" over the institution.

The charter change was filed with the Texas secretary of state and is effective immediately, said W. Winfred Moore, trustee chair.

The charter change apparently will put the convention and the university on a collision course when the BGCT holds its annual meeting Nov. 13-14 in Houston.

Former BGCT president Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, said he expects all legal avenues to be explored to reverse the decision to remove the 145-year-old school and its 12,000-student body from Baptist control.

Gregory and fundamental-conservatives say Baylor should be controlled by Texas Baptists, since they have nourished the institution with financial contributions and students since the school was organized in 1845.

"It was a beautiful job—a classical story on how to steal a school," said Bill Grubbs, a conservative trustee from Dallas who voted against the change. "The whole trustee meeting was railroaded."

The charter change without approval of the BGCT is a violation of the constitution of the Texas Baptist convention which says any changes or amendments to an institution's charter must be submitted to the convention for approval at the annual meeting and that any such changes require the prior approval of the Executive Board in the meeting just prior to the annual meeting.

To follow that provision, Baylor trustees would have had to submit the change to the Sept. 11 Executive Board meeting. It did not do so.

Mike Bishop, assistant to Baylor President Herbert H. Reynolds, said that under Texas law and provision of Baylor's charter, which was granted by the Republic of Texas and predates the BGCT charter, the university trustees have exclusive right to amend the charter.

No notice of the change was given to the BGCT even though Bishop said it had been under study for two years.

Texas Baptist Executive Director William M. Pinson Jr. was not told about the proposed change and, in fact, learned of it first when called for comment by the (Texas) Baptist Standard.

He declined comment until he has had time to confer with Reynolds and Moore.

Baylor, the oldest and largest of the eight universities affiliated with the BGCT, was established when Texas was still a republic. It has a record enrollment of 12,019 students this fall and is scheduled to receive \$6,048,219 from the state convention budget to be considered at the Houston convention.

The BGCT heretofore has elected trustees of the university. If the new arrangement stands, the convention will continue to elect 48 trustees, but their only responsibility will be to elect one-fourth of the regents and to be "liaisons" between the convention and the university and to help in fund raising.

Three-fourths of the regents would be elected by the regents themselves. They would have to be Baptists, but only six would be required to be Texas Baptists.

Trustees implemented the new structure during their Sept. 21 meeting by electing nine of their number as regents for three-year terms and naming seven new regents.

Among the new regents are two men who have been involved in recent denominational affairs, W. Dewey Presley of Dallas, former chair of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and John Baugh, a Houston businessman and active participant of Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Both Reynolds and Moore said the university intends to maintain its "close affiliation" with Texas Baptists. Both also cited the threat of the fundamental-conservative takeover of the university board such as has happened to Southern Baptist seminaries as promoting the action.

Reynolds said the university has been mentioned frequently as a takeover target.

"I think taking Baylor out of the eye of the political storm, not only in Texas, but also in the SBC, will make it much easier for us to get on with our missions involvement in this state and other places," Moore said.

"Baylor will not be there to be shot at or defended. We don't have to expend the energy to defend a takeover of Baylor University...."

Moore defended the unexpected trustee action by saying it was "strictly a trustee matter. We didn't want to create a lot of unnecessary uneasiness by publicizing it."

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(This story was compiled by Dan Martin, interim ABP news director, from reports by Toby Druin, associate editor (Texas) Baptist Standard; Jim Jones, religion editor, Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram and Douglas Wong, religion writer, Waco (Texas) Tribune-Herald.)