
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

Phone: (904) 396-0396 Fax: (904) 396-4441 CServe; 70420,73

November 14, 1991

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Close votes bode no quick end for college disputes
- * Texas Baptists loosen grip on Baylor University
- * Maryland/Delaware cuts BJC funds, adopts BF&M
- * 'Quick-fix' religion spawns unhealthy faith, author says
- * Illinois Baptists approve funding for ABP news service
- * Midwestern Fellowship elects officers, hears Hewett
- * After hearing from both sides, N.C. church funds Fellowship

Close votes in Texas, South Carolina
bode no quick end for college disputes

By Greg Warner

(ABP) -- While Texas Baptists apparently resolved their dispute over control of Baylor University Nov. 11, Baptists in South Carolina voted Nov. 12 to take Furman University to court rather than ease their grip on the school.

Texas Baptists, meeting on the Waco campus of Baylor, approved a compromise between Baylor trustees and state leaders that purports to give the 12,000-student school almost full autonomy over the election of its trustees while preserving the school's Baptist character.

But South Carolina Baptists found no such liking for a similar plan for Furman. Messengers ignored a compromise developed by Furman and state Baptist leaders, choosing instead to seek a legal reversal of Furman's decision to elect its own trustees.

Both battles were bitterly fought and narrowly won.

A substitute motion in Texas that would have authorized a lawsuit against Baylor was defeated 44 percent to 56 percent. In South Carolina the motion to sue Furman won by less than a percentage point -- 50.5 percent to 49.5 percent -- or 38 votes out of 3,984 cast.

The South Carolina decision sparked dire predictions about the future for Furman and the state's Baptists.

"The relationship has been destroyed," said Robert Shrum of Rock Hill, who chaired the committee that negotiated the compromise. "There is no turning back of the clock. This effectively destroys forever the relationship South Carolina Baptists had with Furman. There is no trust anymore."

Furman President John E. Johns said he was "devastated" by the action. "I never dreamed that the South Carolina Baptist Convention would vote to take Furman University to court after our attempt to compromise," he said.

Messengers in Texas were deeply divided over whether the new relationship with Baylor will guarantee the university will continue to operate free of "fundamentalist" control or send the school down the "well-

worn road" of institutional secularization.

The agreement "will guarantee the secularization of Baylor University," charged Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, who led an ad hoc group of the state's most prominent fundamental-conservative pastors in opposing the agreement.

But Baylor President Herbert Reynolds said more autonomy is necessary to defend the school against a threatened takeover by "fundamentalists." He promised to keep Baylor true to its Baptist roots..

The battle between educational freedom and accountability was fought on several other battlefields this week, as Baptists in more than a dozen states gathered for their annual meetings.

-- Florida Baptists came within 24 votes of defunding Stetson University in DeLand, which only last year won more freedom in selection of its trustees.

-- Louisiana Baptists gave a cautious go-ahead to minor changes in the charter of Louisiana College in Pineville after getting assurances the school will remain in control of the state convention.

But the biggest battles were in Texas and South Carolina.

The two disputes started on a remarkably similar course. Trustees of both Baylor and Furman acted unilaterally in 1990 to change their charters, taking power to elect trustees away from the state conventions and giving it to the trustees themselves.

In response, both state conventions placed Baptist funding of the respective schools in escrow while they tried to negotiate concessions from the trustees.

In each case, a compromise was reached between trustees and convention committees that retained Baptist funding for the school and permitted some convention influence in trustee selection. Both state conventions were asked to approve the compromises this week.

But the plans themselves were also different.

Baylor agreed to require all regents (formerly trustees) to be Baptists. Furman wanted up 20 percent of trustees to be non-Baptists, in part to aid fund-raising outside Baptist circles.

Texas Baptists would be allowed direct election of 25 percent of Baylor's regents, with some consideration given to their suggestions for the remaining 75 percent. South Carolina Baptists could elect 80 percent of Furman trustees but only from a list of pre-approved nominees submitted by the university -- two nominees for each vacancy.

Messengers to the South Carolina Baptist Convention in Greenville didn't hear the Furman proposal debated. A substitute motion was introduced that took precedence over the proposed agreement.

The substitute, offered by Mt. Pleasant attorney Chip Campsen, seeks a "declaratory judgment action" against Furman. It will ask a court to rule on the legality of the trustees' 1990 decision to create a self-perpetuating board for the 2,500-student school.

Unlike the similar 1990 action by Baylor's trustees, which violated the state convention's charter but not the school's, Furman's action is considered a breach of its own charter, which requires approval of the state convention for charter changes.

Even after the lawsuit was authorized, the Furman dispute continued to dominate the Nov. 12-13 meeting.

Efforts both to reverse the decision and to amplify its impact fell by the wayside. A motion to suspend parliamentary procedure and reconsider the substitute motion failed for lack of a quorum. But a motion to delete \$1.8 million in convention funding for the school was defeated as well. Furman critics also failed in two attempts to replace five new trustees who were nominated by the school and elected by messengers.

Even after the convention, Furman supporters tried to get the state's

General Board to call a special convention session later this year to reconsider the lawsuit against Furman. That too failed by a vote of 32-20.

In Texas, after the Baylor compromise was introduced, Houston pastor Ed Young offered a substitute motion to settle the dispute by binding arbitration or a file lawsuit against the school to get Baylor's governing board to "negate or overturn" its 1990 charter revision.

Texas Baptist president Phil Lineberger of Richardson argued the compromise, which he helped draft, "is the closest relationship between the convention and Baylor that can be reached at this time."

But Gregory, a two-time Baylor graduate, warned that Christian colleges that disassociate from their sponsoring bodies travel "a well-worn road to separation" and inevitably become less Christian and more secular.

"I believe Baylor will secularize with such velocity that some of the people who voted for this agreement will be shocked," Gregory later told reporters.

Baylor President Reynolds countered that "deterministic" thinking. "It's not the convention that makes us Christian, it's Jesus Christ," Reynolds said in a news conference after the vote. "We have no intention of getting on our horse and riding off in a different direction."

Although no one professed to be laying plans for a lawsuit against Baylor, several opponents of the agreement implied one might still be in the works. With the agreement in place between Baylor and the BGCT, however, Reynolds questioned whether anyone else could prove he or she has legal standing for a suit.

Texas leaders lamented Nov. 11 that the Baylor dispute had so deeply divided Baptists in the state. But when they heard the news about Furman the next day, they were relieved they had been spared a worse outcome.

"We can be grateful that Baylor University was willing to go much further than Furman in reaching an agreement which assures its future as a Baptist university," said Dick Maples, newly elected convention president.

James Guenther of Nashville, Tenn., who served as legal counsel to the Baptist General Convention of Texas during the Baylor dispute, noted the different charter requirements of Baylor and Furman may have played a role in the different outcomes; Furman had to violate its charter to change its board and Baylor didn't.

"From a legal standpoint, this factor gives the South Carolina Convention a significant advantage in a lawsuit which would not have been available to the BGCT," said Guenther, who also is legal counsel for the Southern Baptist Convention. "While this difference does not guarantee the South Carolina Convention will prevail in its suit, it certainly gives them a significant leg up which the BGCT did not have."

The differences between the two compromise proposals also played a role, Guenther said.

"Baylor University apparently wanted a closer relationship to the BGCT than Furman was willing to negotiate with the South Carolina Convention," he said. "Baylor was willing to give the BGCT some control and participation in the university's governance, without any guarantee of funding."

"When the South Carolina Convention found itself faced with a proposal agreement inferior to the Baylor agreement and a legal position which was comparatively stronger," Guenther said, "South Carolina narrowly rejected the agreement."

Maples, who was elected president in Texas with the support of the Baylor Alumni Association, noted the Baylor agreement allows the state convention to vote on funding for the school each year, giving messengers more control over the future direction of the relationship.

Messengers to the Florida Baptist Convention in Pensacola nearly exercised that control Nov. 12, one year after renegotiating their relationship with Stetson.

Fort Lauderdale pastor Darrell Orman offered a motion to redirect the \$700,000 earmarked for Stetson in the 1992 convention budget to church-starting efforts.

As part of sweeping changes approved last year, Florida Baptists agreed gradually to reduce Stetson funding to \$500,000 by 1995, with the option of eliminating the remaining funding in the year 2000. In exchange Florida Baptists gave up their right to approve election of Stetson's 24 trustees, although they have a reduced role in nominating 18 of them.

Some who spoke this year in favor of Orman's motion charged the school with liberal leanings. But state executive John Sullivan argued successfully for leaving the funding agreement intact.

Last year, after approving the joint agreement, messengers turned back an attempt to cut all Stetson funds on the spot; the motion failed by a margin of three to one. This year the vote was a lot closer -- 437 to 461 -- with 51.3 percent voting to keep Stetson in the budget.

Messengers to the Louisiana Baptist Convention Nov. 12-13 easily approved a renegotiated charter for Louisiana College, but only after the vote was delayed a year by apprehensive school officials.

Under both the old and new charters, Louisiana Baptists elect the college's trustees. Eliminated in the new version, however, is the college's obligation to operate in accordance with convention documents and the convention's power to instruct that changes be made in the college's charter.

When the changes were first proposed last November, just days after unilateral action by Baylor and Furman trustees, some Louisiana Baptists voiced concern the convention would lose control of the school. In the face of possible rejection of the proposal at the state convention, school officials withdrew the plan for a year. Messengers appointed a dialogue committee to evaluate the plan.

This year, after meeting with college officials and obtaining four minor concessions, the committee gave the needed assurances to messengers. "We believe trustees have been willing to make adjustments in the charter as to assure Louisiana Baptists our institution will remain in close ties to the convention," said Mike Walker of Lafayette, who chaired the dialogue committee.

The plan was approved by two thirds of the messengers.

Although some Baptist conventions have granted their colleges more freedom, most have not gone willingly. In most instances, there is an unmistakable political dimension that mirrors the struggle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention and its affiliated state bodies.

While South Carolina Baptists prepare to do legal battle over Furman, and Baylor officials wait warily for news of a possible lawsuit, and Stetson supporters brace for an annual fight over Florida Baptist funding, at least one thing seems certain: College education among Baptists will continue to sail on troubled waters for some time.

-30-

-- Contributing to this story were Ken Camp of Texas, Ben McDade of South Carolina, Lacy Thompson of Louisiana and Lindsay Bergstrom of Florida.

Texas Baptists loosen
grip on Baylor University

By Greg Warner

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Texas Baptists granted Baylor University more autonomy in selection of its trustees Nov. 11, climaxing more than a year of

bitter struggle for control of the country's largest Baptist university.

Before approving the new relationship, the record 10,800 messengers to the annual Baptist General Convention of Texas turned back an attempt to derail the compromise agreement. By a 56 percent vote, messengers defeated a motion by Houston pastor Ed Young to settle the dispute by either binding arbitration or a lawsuit against the school.

Young's substitute motion was an attempt to get Baylor's governing board to "negate or overturn" its 1990 charter revision, which gave the school a self-perpetuating board. Formerly the BGCT elected all of the school's trustees. In July leaders of Baylor and the BGCT negotiated a compromise intended to grant the 12,000-student school almost full autonomy from the BGCT while preserving the school's Baptist character.

Although the agreement requires that all 24 Baylor regents be Baptist, it allows the BGCT to elect only 25 percent of them. The regents themselves will elect the other 75 percent, but they agreed to give consideration to the suggestions of the BGCT in filling the other positions.

After Young's substitute motion was defeated, messengers approved the compromise agreement by a slightly wider margin -- 59 percent to 41 percent.

Baylor's board already has approved the agreement overwhelmingly (110-36) but now must rewrite its charter again to incorporate the changes, said Baylor President Herbert Reynolds.

Messengers were deeply divided over whether the new relationship with Baylor will guarantee the university will continue to operate free of "fundamentalist" control or send the school down the "well-worn road" of institutional secularization.

The agreement "will guarantee the secularization of Baylor University," charged Dallas pastor Joel Gregory, a two-time Baylor graduate. "I believe Baylor will secularize with such velocity that some of the people who voted for this agreement will be shocked," Gregory told reporters.

But Reynolds, who described the charter change in 1990 as a necessary defense against a threatened takeover by "fundamentalists," promised to keep Baylor true to its Baptist roots.

"It's not the convention that makes us Christian, it's Jesus Christ," Reynolds said in a news conference after the vote. "We have no intention of getting on our horse and riding off in a different direction."

Bolstered by Baylor's successful get-out-the-vote campaign, moderate-conservatives this year solidified their control of the Texas convention. They won every convention office and held off every other challenge, including one that would have cut BGCT funding of Baylor by 70 percent.

For more than a decade, Texas Baptists have been fighting over Baylor, described by some as "the crown jewel" of Texas Baptists or the Baptist version of Notre Dame.

This year's conflict -- perhaps the most intense ever -- was played out on the Baylor campus in Waco, which had been selected as the site for the convention. Before messengers began arriving, students reportedly encircled the 10,500-seat arena in a show of support for the compromise. Others carried placards endorsing the agreement, which was drafted by leaders of Baylor and the BGCT.

Opposition was led by the Baylor Restoration Committee, an ad hoc group of the state's most prominent fundamental-conservative pastors. Both sides claimed to represent the true Baylor tradition and mounted extensive public relations campaigns to prove their point.

Although many people hoped the latest agreement should settle the Baylor dispute once and for all, the decision was greeted with warnings that the issue is far from over -- and may end up in court.

Meanwhile, many Texas Baptists fear that fundamental-conservatives, mobilized and organized to oppose the Baylor proposal, now will launch their most serious challenge to moderate-conservative control of the BGCT. If

Baylor's newfound freedom leaves Baylor supporters with no incentive to attend future conventions, it may mean tough times for moderate-conservatives who have relied on the pro-Baylor vote in years past.

During debate of the Baylor compromise, BGCT president Phil Lineberger of Richardson said the convention had only three options -- "to litigate, to separate or to negotiate" -- after a special BGCT committee was unable to resolve the dispute.

Lineberger said the compromise, based on negotiation between leaders of the BGCT and Baylor, "is the closest relationship between the convention and Baylor that can be reached at this time."

He and other speakers pointed out that, since Baylor's board already had amended its charter and refused to rescind the action, defeat of the compromise would not restore the former Baylor-BGCT relationship but only guarantee that the self-perpetuating board established in 1990 would remain.

But Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, called the compromise "a dangerous precedent" and "a betrayal of the trust of those saints who have sacrificed to make Baylor a great institution."

Dewey Pressley of Dallas, a member of the Baylor governing board, criticized the political nature of the opposition, which came primarily from fundamental-conservatives.

But Joel Gregory, who in September took center stage for the opposition when he lambasted the Baylor compromise from his pulpit at First Baptist Church of Dallas, told messengers the dispute was not "fundamentalists versus moderates" -- a comment greeted by jeers from some messengers. "This is a Baptist-versus-separatist issue," said Gregory.

Gregory warned that Christian colleges that disassociate from their sponsoring bodies travel "a well-worn road to separation" and inevitably become less Christian and more secular.

After the Baylor compromise survived Young's challenge, opponents sought a parliamentary ruling to require approval by two-thirds of the messengers. The challenge was overruled.

During consideration of the BGCT budget, a motion was offered to delete 70 percent of the BGCT's \$4.4 million for the university and its health-care system. The amendment failed by a wide margin.

Although several opponents of the Baylor agreement implied a lawsuit might be in the works, both Gregory and Young denied they are involved in any such plans. "We want to avoid that at all costs," Young said.

Baylor supporters showed their strength during the election of officers, propelling a slate endorsed by the Baylor Alumni Association into office: Bryan pastor Dick Maples, president; San Antonio pastor Harry Lucenay, first vice president; and Carolyn Cole Bucy, an ordained minister to youth in Waco, second vice president.

Texas Baptists adopted six resolutions, including denunciations of "elective abortion" and state-operated lotteries and an affirmation of church-state separation.

-30-

Maryland/Delaware cuts BJC funds,
adopts 'Baptist Faith and Message'

BEL AIR, Md. (ABP) -- Fundamental-conservatives asserted themselves powerfully at the 156th annual session of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, capturing their biggest victory yet in the traditionally moderate-conservative convention.

While failing to elect a single fundamental-conservative officer, they successfully championed several other causes, cutting the Baptist Joint Committee from the convention budget and passing a resolution designating the

1963 "Baptist Faith and Message" as the convention's confession of faith.

The annual convention, held Nov. 11-13 in Bel Air, Md., passed four other resolutions, including one that requests trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to reconsider their decision to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

An amendment to the proposed 1992 budget of Maryland and Delaware Baptists cut a \$3,600 line item for the BJC, a Washington-based religious-liberty coalition. The amendment, which passed 210-169, was the only change to the \$4.4 million budget. The \$3,600 allocation would have matched the two-state convention's contribution to the BJC in 1991.

In June the Southern Baptist Convention cut all its funding of the controversial BJC, effectively ending the 54-year relationship between the SBC and the agency.

The resolution affirming the "Baptist Faith and Message" passed 224-129, making the doctrinal statement the convention's official "confession of faith." Fundamental-conservatives have tried unsuccessfully three times in the last four years to get the convention to pass a resolution or make a bylaw change related to the "Baptist Faith and Message," which affirms the Bible as "truth without any mixture of error."

The Ruschlikon resolution implored FMB trustees to reconsider their action against the Baptist seminary near Zurich. On Oct. 9, trustees voted 35-28 to cut off \$365,000 in promised funds to the seminary.

After softening the original motion from "rescind their action" to "reconsider," messengers passed the Ruschlikon resolution overwhelmingly, with four dissenting votes.

Homer Carter, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rockville, Md., was re-elected president by a 296-177 vote. The meeting drew 813 messengers and visitors.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

'Quick-fix' religion spawns
unhealthy faith, author says

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Reliance on Jesus as the "quick fix" to all life's problems is an unhealthy codependence that prevents many Christians from experiencing true spirituality, according to Episcopal priest and author Leo Booth.

"I'm not against people finding solace and comfort in the church. I'm against people being used and staying in the victim's role. I'm against people being told that if they accept Jesus, he will make everything in life all right," the controversial author and lecturer told participants at an interfaith conference on addiction.

Booth spoke on religious abuse and religious addiction during the 1991 Regional Clergy Conference on Addiction in the Religious Congregation Oct. 28-30 at Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas. The meeting was sponsored by more than 20 agencies and organizations, including the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Dallas Baptist Association and the Texas Conference of Churches.

"The family of the church has some of the same characteristics as any dysfunctional family," Booth said, pointing to addictive and abusive patterns in religious life.

Addictive impulses take many forms and tend to be grouped in distinctive ways, he noted. While alcoholics often are likely to be compulsive smokers and gamblers, persons with addictive personalities who come from legalistic

religious backgrounds tend to become compulsive-over-eaters and workaholics.

"Compulsive eating is the most prevalent addiction in Christian churches, and the more rigid the religious background, the more prevalent it seems to be," Booth said. "You can be killing the body -- the temple of the Spirit -- with food as much as with cocaine."

Characteristics of religious addiction and abuse include the inability to think, doubt or question; shame-based belief; obsessive adherence to rules; a progressive detachment from the real world; "magical thinking" that God will "fix" everything that is wrong in life; and belief that sex is dirty, Booth said.

One way that persons experience religious abuse is sexually, Booth noted, pointing out that the abuse may have more to do with messages received about sexuality than with actual physical contact.

"In a sense, all women have been sexually abused by the church," he said. "Putting women in a secondary role on the basis of their gender is a form of abuse."

Many of the problems associated with religious abuse stem from an intolerant and low view of God, Booth said.

"If you have a small God, you will be a small person. If you worship a judgmental God, you will be a judgmental person. If you worship a God of love and forgiveness, you will be a loving and forgiving person."

Robert Hemfelt, author and licensed staff psychologist with the Minirth-Meier Clinic in Richardson, Texas, pointed out the danger of "commended addictions" -- behaviors such as work, exercise and religious activity that tend to be applauded by society.

"As a society, we are driven by the patently false assumption that if something is good, more and more of it is better," he said.

That "drivenness" is propelling baby boomers in the United States in two opposite spiritual directions, Hemfelt said. Some are retreating to the perceived safety of rigid fundamentalism with its assurances of doctrinal purity. Others are reaching out to the far-fetched promises of New Age theology.

"From either extreme, the spiritual chant of the faith is the same--'We are driven. We are driven indeed,'" he said.

Hemfelt characterized the modern problem of drivenness as an addiction to control, achievement or accomplishment and a belief that the mastery of one's body, performance or environment is the answer to emotional and spiritual hunger.

"There is a profound inability to love and value oneself as a unique creation of God apart from external achievement or performance," he said, adding that it can result in a sense of total spiritual alienation.

"Compulsivity may be a mask or disguise on the outside for an emotional and spiritual vacuum on the inside," he said.

Thomas Henderson, who in 1981 became the first NFL player to publicly confess a cocaine addiction, said he wore the mask of "Hollywood Henderson" as a Dallas Cowboy to avoid the painful reality of his own spiritual and emotional condition.

"Hollywood was my alter ego because it enabled me to keep from finding out who Thomas really was," he said. "I wore the mask because I had no true identity."

"Twelve-step programs saved my life, changed my life and helped me find faith in God," he added, noting that the recovery programs accomplished what praying several times with evangelist James Robison could not accomplish.

"Prayer works, but prayer works a lot better when I get up and help it work," he said. "I'm a miracle, but I had to choose to participate in my miracle."

Illinois Baptists approve
funding for ABP news service

By Ferrell Foster

DECATUR, Ill. (ABP) -- Messengers to the annual meeting of Illinois Baptist State Association voted to pay \$1,200 for the Associated Baptist Press news service despite opposition from some Illinois Baptists.

The messengers defeated a proposed amendment to the 1992 IBSA budget that would have deleted the money for ABP. The amendment was defeated 195 to 278 (41 percent to 59 percent).

The proposal had stirred debate in the weeks prior to the annual meeting, and that debate continued on the floor of the convention. Five people spoke for the amendment and five spoke against it before a time limit for discussion expired.

ABP is one of two news services used by the Illinois Baptist, which is funded and governed by the Illinois Baptist State Association.

The other news service is Baptist Press, the official news agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. Baptist Press is funded by the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget, and is provided free to state Baptist newspapers such as the Illinois Baptist.

Associated Baptist Press is an autonomous news service formed in September 1990 after the SBC Executive Committee, which operates Baptist Press, fired the staff. It is governed by a self-perpetuating board of directors and is funded by donations and subscriptions.

The Illinois Baptist had used the ABP service at no charge for the past year, but ABP requested the \$1,200 subscription fee for 1992. A request from Illinois editor Bill Webb for the state association to provide the money in its budget sparked heated debate in the state.

When the budget request came to the floor of the state meeting Nov. 5, debate focused not on the content or use of ABP's stories but on its alleged ties to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the use of money from the Illinois portion of the Cooperative Program to subscribe.

The Fellowship, an organization of moderate-conservatives in the SBC, has no official relationship with ABP but provides about 18 percent of ABP's funding this year.

Belleville pastor Bill Fox proposed an amendment to delete the \$1,200 for ABP from the Illinois budget, saying he disapproved of using Cooperative Program money for ABP. In an apparent reference to the Fellowship, Fox said, "I feel very strongly that those who have gone out from us are not of us."

Although Illinois Baptists have not been publicly divided in the past over national SBC issues, Fox predicted paying for ABP would widen the "so-called silent division" among Illinois Baptists "until we have chaos." He warned that his church and others would withhold contributions from the state association as a result.

Patrick Stewart of St. Charles complained Illinois Baptists have no control over ABP and its board. "To pay for the use of ABP in effect supports an agency over which we have no cooperative oversight or protection," he said.

Lloyd Jones of O'Fallon also backed the amendment, saying the firing of the Baptist Press editors was "very proper" in light of the "consistent and persistent resurgence of conservatism within our denomination."

Of ABP, Jones said: "People have a right to form new organizations. However, this new organization is too tightly tied to those who no longer lead the Southern Baptist Convention, who have formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, who seem to be intent on forming a new denomination, who are unwilling by personal makeup, pride or conviction to work with our present

leadership...."

He suggested using the service "if it is printable" but not paying for it.

The messengers who spoke against the amendment and in favor of paying the \$1,200 subscription fee focused primarily on freedom of the press.

"I think this amendment is about censoring a news source, and it should be defeated," said Macomb pastor John Wilkinson. "For any individual to make an informed or intelligent decision on any issue, it's absolutely essential to have a free, unbiased flow of information no matter what source we get that information from."

Wilkinson called Fox's amendment "an abridgment of our very precious Baptist freedom of conscience."

"Too many of our Baptist forefathers have suffered persecution, been imprisoned, beaten and some of them have died because they promoted the idea and defended the concept of freedom of conscience," Wilkinson said. "They believed that...truth could only be ascertained if people had all the facts, and a controlled press cannot give you facts. It can only give you propaganda."

Wayne von Whitney of Godfrey added ABP should not be condemned for receiving "a fraction" of its funding from the Fellowship. Southern Baptist seminaries and missionaries also receive money from the Fellowship without being condemned, he said.

Messengers on both sides of the issue praised the fairness and competence of Editor Webb, who later expressed regret over the divided vote.

"I felt as if the primary concern that many people had... had to do with budgeting Cooperative Program funds and not necessarily the Illinois Baptist having access to Associated Baptist Press stories," the editor said.

"It may be that there is a better way to actually pay the user fee for using Associated Baptist Press," he continued. "But my primary purpose in requesting budget (funds) was simply to pay for a service I believe benefits the Illinois Baptist and its readers."

-30-

Midwestern Fellowship organizes,
elects officers, hears Hewett

SOUTH HOLLAND, Ill. (ABP) -- Representatives from a 10-state region elected officers for the midwestern chapter of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Oct. 11-12 in South Holland, Ill.

The group's informational/organizational meeting drew 38 registrants from four states -- Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Iowa. No representation came from the other six states -- Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Dorothy Sample of Flint, Mich., was elected moderator of the midwestern group. She is a former national president of Woman's Missionary Union. Also elected were Forrest Cornelius of Iowa City, Iowa, as vice moderator and Linda Benning of Carbondale, Ill., as secretary-treasurer.

Fellowship supporters from each of the states have been asked to elect two representatives each to a midwestern coordinating council.

John Hewett of Asheville, N.C., moderator of the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said the Fellowship, an organization of moderate-conservatives, is "an opportunity to do something new."

"My hunch is that we're going to do that within the larger family of Southern Baptists for quite a while," he said. "Part of that is, we have been through one Civil War in the South, and we don't have a lot of hankering for

another."

The meeting also included a message by Chicago pastor Donald Sharp and an address by Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler of Cincinnati, Ohio, retired executive director of WMU. Participants also discussed perceptions of CBF's purpose and future.

-- By Bill Webb

After hearing from both sides,
N.C. church funds Fellowship

HICKORY, N.C. (ABP) -- Members of First Baptist Church of Hickory, N.C., voted Oct. 13 to send its contributions for world missions through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The 1,800-member congregation attracted attention in August by inviting Morris Chapman and John Hewett to discuss the Southern Baptist Convention controversy and missions funding in two separate meetings with church members -- apparently the first SBC church to do so.

Chapman is president of the Southern Baptist Convention and a pastor in Texas. Hewett is a pastor in North Carolina and moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization that provides an alternative funding channel for moderate-conservatives upset with control of the SBC by fundamental-conservatives.

"It was a pure democratic process -- Baptists at their finest hour." Pastor Thomas Melzoni said of his church's funding decision.

Hickory's decision was approved by 71 percent of members voting. The 29 percent of the congregation voting against the new system can designate their gifts to the Southern Baptist causes of their choosing.

Gifts to world missions from the congregation total about \$120,000 this year and have been held in an escrow account pending the decision by the church.

Melzoni said the decision was also an attempt to make a statement to Southern Baptist leadership "that we don't understand why churches like ours aren't included in Southern Baptist life."

"We have supported Southern Baptist causes and are considered out of step simply because we have female deacons," said Melzoni, a former staff member of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

The Hickory congregation will continue its support of North Carolina Baptists and will contribute the minimum amount to the SBC (\$2,500) to remain eligible for 10 messengers at the annual national convention.

-30-

***** END *****