

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

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Southeastern denies Drummond
chancellorship, sabbatical

By Lisa Bellamy

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Trustees at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary revised the retirement package for President Lewis Drummond March 9, denying him the chancellorship and a seven-month sabbatical he sought.

Drummond, 65, announced in January he would retire effective June 30. At that time, the trustees' executive committee released no details of the financial package, pending approval by the full board.

That board, which is meeting on the Wake Forest, N.C., campus March 9-10, voted to give Drummond a "gift of gratitude of \$100,000." It also gave him a one-time payment of a tenth of his annual salary, his seminary car and furniture from the president's house to compensate him for \$27,000 he put into the house. His current salary and benefits are about \$100,000.

Drummond, Southeastern's president since 1988, also will get retirement benefits usually reserved for a 10-year employee, including a Medicare supplement for him and for his wife, Betty; a \$20,000 life-insurance policy; access to the seminary's health center; and up to 22 days of vacation pay that is part of his base salary.

"Dr. Drummond has guided the seminary through troubled waters," trustees chairman Roger Ellsworth of Benton, Ill., said in a statement released after a lengthy closed-door discussion.

Privately, some trustees criticized the package as excessive, even though it was scaled down. Drummond, however, said it was due compensation.

"I feel that these last four years I've made a lot of sacrifices," he said. To those who considered it unusual for someone with only four years' service to be granted retirement benefits normally requiring 10 years' tenure, Drummond said, "It has been an unusual four years."

Drummond did not get two key items said to be part of the retirement package approved by trustee leaders in January -- pay for a seven-month sabbatical and the honorary title of chancellor.

Members of Southeastern's faculty opposed the chancellorship as "inappropriate," pointing out that Drummond has served a shorter term than

any of the seminary's previous three presidents and that the seminary "has functioned without such an officer throughout its history."

Trustee Calvin Partain of New Mexico, who voted for the revised package, said the trustees decided a sabbatical also "wasn't fitting."

"He's been here four years and gets \$100,000," Partain said. "It's a lot of money, but I'm not sure that I'd go through what he's been through for \$100,000."

Drummond, a fundamental-conservative, has presided over a seminary whose faculty and student body have shrunk and whose academic accreditation has been put in jeopardy since fellow fundamental-conservatives took control. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools put the seminary on probation in December and the Association of Theological Schools has threatened to do likewise.

Still Drummond, who came to Southeastern from a teaching post at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said he made positive contributions to Southeastern.

"I feel like it's probably best for me to go back to the classroom or something like that and finish my ministry in that way," he said, giving the first indication of his plans after retirement.

He is said to be under consideration for a chair in evangelism and church growth at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

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-- Lisa Bellamy is a staff writer for the Raleigh News and Observer. This story is reprinted with permission.

Alliance changes name,
ponders uncertain future

By Dan Martin

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Alliance honored its past and pondered its future during its fifth annual convocation in the church where it was born.

The 565 members who registered for the convocation in Providence Baptist Church of Charlotte, N.C., where the SBA was formed in 1987, voted to drop the word "Southern" from the organization's name.

Members voted without dissent to adopt the name Alliance of Baptists, which executive director Stan Hastey said symbolized that "many of us no longer consider ourselves Southern Baptists."

New Alliance president Ann Quattlebaum of Greenville, S.C., said the action affirms "our desire to have more communion, more fellowship with all Christians."

In presenting the motion to change the name, Nancy Ammerman, a professor at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, said, "We don't know all that the future is, but we are no longer identifying ourselves with where we have been."

The group will always be an alliance, she said, but "with all Baptists."

While the action signaled the Alliance is moving away from its roots as a Southern Baptist organization dissenting from the prevailing fundamental-conservative control of the parent body, the questions of what the future holds for the Alliance dominated the three-day convocation.

As the meeting began March 5, however, it appeared the question of homosexuality would overshadow the convocation because of controversy over a vote by member congregation Pullen Memorial Baptist Church of Raleigh, N.C., to bless a "union" between a gay church member and his companion.

Several speakers cited the Southern Baptist Executive Committee's reprimand of Pullen Memorial and another congregation, Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Durham, N.C., which is considering licensing a homosexual for the ministry.

The powerful Executive Committee also is considering excluding the churches, and others which "condone" homosexuality, from being seated at annual SBC meetings.

Elizabeth Barnes, associate professor-elect of theology and ethics at the Alliance-sponsored Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.), called the action "an infringement" on the right of two churches for even discussing the issue, and before either congregation had made a decision. It is a rank violation of Baptist faith and practice."

Mahan Siler, pastor of Pullen Memorial Church and a member of the Alliance board, was scheduled to conduct a workshop on "Churches Responding to Homosexual Persons" during the convocation.

As the convocation began, Siler told the board he was withdrawing and would not conduct the workshop. Later, after reconsideration, he decided to proceed, although he changed the format and did not use the Pullen Memorial experience as a case study.

Siler said he decided to cancel the workshop because he had been the object of intense media attention since the church voted to bless the same-gender union.

"I was afraid it would get too much attention and become the story of the convocation," he said. "But as I struggled with it, I decided the message we would send by canceling it would be more dangerous than conducting it."

While the issue was the topic of hallway conversations, it emerged only briefly in an almost unnoticed way during the annual meeting.

At the request of the board of directors, Tom Sims, chairman of the public policy committee, asked the Alliance president to appoint a task force on human sexuality.

Sims, a county prosecutor from Richton, Miss., said there was no intent to react to either of the North Carolina churches or to the Executive Committee. But he added: "I personally find what the Executive Committee did is totally outside any Baptist polity I am aware of. It is none of their business what any local church does."

The task force will "not just be on homosexuality," Sims said, "but will deal with a broader range of issues such as sex education."

The announcement that Quattlebaum will appoint the task force passed almost unnoticed in the business session.

Much more attention was given to the future of the organization.

Hastey, in his annual state-of-the-Alliance message, painted a somber picture of the future, noting members "must face the fact that our movement's growth has stalled."

He said there has been little growth in membership in recent months. The count of affiliated congregations remains at 133, and overall membership at about 73,000. "Growth has been insignificant," he said.

In noting the formation of the Alliance in 1987, Hastey said, "Some of our founders no doubt had visions of a movement of hundreds of affiliated churches and many thousands of individual members.

"Surely it can be said that all of us underestimated the fierceness with which the vast majority of Southern Baptists would cling to a body they truly came to believe was 'God's last and only hope' on earth."

He added the founders -- "and the rest of us" -- did not know that "all too many denominational administrators would end up actually aiding and abetting the takeover of the convention by pretending there was no crisis or trying to wish it away or, worst of all, by collaborating, however unintentionally, with the very persons whose avowed objective was and is the destruction of academic and church freedom."

Hastey also noted that the Alliance "no longer is the only game in town. The formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship last May inevitably has resulted in an intense discussion, inside and outside the Alliance, as to how the two groups ought to relate to one another."

The prospect of a Fellowship-Alliance merger, he said, is greeted with a variety of responses, from "eagerness to dread."

Hastey reported that an evaluation of Alliance financial data indicates that fewer than 10 Alliance churches are giving the bulk of their mission money through the organization. And more than a third of the churches supporting the Alliance are also contributing regularly to the Fellowship.

Hastey urged members to "confront directly our situation and set ourselves on a course that will lead to an intentional decision about our own future. I don't want to predict the outcome of such a process outright. What is important, it seems to me, is that we take charge of our fate, that we determine our future with intentionality and purposefulness."

Both Hastey and Quattlebaum later told Associated Baptist Press they are uncertain what the future holds.

"I don't think anyone knows at this point the future of the Alliance," Quattlebaum said. "We're dialoguing in good faith with the Fellowship, but it is yet to be determined what the outcome will be."

Hastey said he believes the Alliance will continue "in some form." But, he added, "I don't know how long we will continue in our present structure."

The Alliance, he said, continues to be in dialogue not only with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, but also with the American Baptist Churches in the USA and with the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

"If faced with a decision...many of our churches would go with the Fellowship," Hastey said, but "three or four dozen will look seriously at the ABC option, and a smaller number might even affiliate with the PNBC...."

One participant commented the organization "seems bogged down in questions of our own future. We honored our founders and celebrated our fifth anniversary. If we don't have a tenth anniversary, so what?"

In other actions, the convocation:

-- elected Welton Seale, pastor in North Wilkesboro, N.C., as vice president and Billie Wilkes, a layperson from Fort Worth, Texas, as secretary.

-- were told the organization plans to expend \$125,380 for direct ministry, including \$51,600 from the operating budget, as well as the Global Missions Offering basic goal of \$56,880 and challenge goal of \$16,900.

The 1993 convocation of the Alliance will be at Central Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., Feb. 25-27.

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-- Dan Martin is a free-lance writer and pastor in Penland, N.C.

Romanians turn down
Ruschlikon money

BUCHAREST, Romania (ABP) -- Romanian Baptists, who were accused of endorsing the Foreign Mission Board's defunding of the Ruschlikon seminary in exchange for FMB money for their own theological schools, now say they won't take the \$20,000 in Ruschlikon funds offered them by the FMB.

"Because of the misunderstanding raised around this subject and supported by Baptist press concerning our stand, we cannot accept this money," wrote the top two officials of the Romanian Baptist Union in a March 3 letter to the FMB.

"If the Foreign Mission Board decides to support financially the Baptist

churches in Romania and their institutes from other funds than those appropriated to Ruschlikon initially, we would gladly accept any help," wrote the union's president, Vasile Talos, and general secretary, Nic Gheorghita.

By refusing to accept the money, after appearing to endorse the defunding late last year, the Romanians may have taken a step toward healing a rift between themselves and their Baptist brethren in Europe and America, according to one European Baptist leader.

"They feel that their international relationships have suffered immensely and they want to restore them," Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, told ABP.

Romanian leaders broke ranks with their European Baptist brethren late last year by applauding the FMB's decision to cut \$365,000 in support for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland. All other European Baptist unions that expressed an opinion in the matter denounced the loss of the FMB money, which represents 40 percent of the budget for European Baptists' only international seminary.

A letter sent Dec. 10 to the FMB by Talos and Gheorghita said the general council of the Romanian union "agreed to this decision." But several participants in the meeting later said no vote was taken and Ruschlikon money was not discussed.

Charles Thomas, an FMB missionary in Romania who resigned in January to protest the FMB and Romanian actions, accused the Romanians of endorsing the FMB decision in exchange for promises of "massive" FMB funding for theological schools in Bucharest and Oradea.

Trustees of the FMB refused in December to restore Ruschlikon's funding, instead dividing the money among eight national seminaries in Europe. Each of the two Romanian schools was promised \$10,000.

But both Talos and Gheorghita denied making any "deal" with the FMB to get the Ruschlikon money.

Talos blamed the confusion on Josef Tson, chancellor of the Oradea school and pastor of Second Baptist Church in Oradea which sponsors it. Tson wrote a letter to FMB chairman Bill Hancock Nov. 1 criticizing Ruschlikon and applauding the defunding, which Talos said "aroused suspicions" about the Romanians' endorsement.

In an apparent attempt to clear the air, the union's general council recently voted without opposition not to accept the money.

In a news release from the FMB, Talos also blamed the Baptist press for spreading "rumors that we wanted those monies. No, it is not true."

The EBF's Walter said he will go to Oradea in mid-March to try to resolve the dispute. "There is great tension in the country among the leadership about this whole procedure," he said.

Walter said the Romanians' on-again-off-again endorsement of the Ruschlikon defunding has left him with "mixed feelings" about the future.

"I hope that we can settle these things," Walter said, "but I have had some indication that Josef Tson is trying now to have some influence on the teachers in Bucharest," site of the union-sponsored seminary.

"I fully accept that the Baptist union in Romania could have a different opinion than the other unions concerning Ruschlikon and the way it was defunded," Walter said. "The way (the Romanians) did this -- not contacting us and other Europeans leaders -- caused some astonishment."

Considering the aid provided to Romanian Baptists from throughout Europe, he added, "this kind of action was contrary to all we had experienced in the past."

Walter said the more recent actions in Romania, however, give him some hope for improved relationships in the future.

CLC warned about dangers
of genetic research

By Ron Chaney

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The 15-year research project in genetic engineering poses a serious enough threat that it could overshadow the debate over abortion in America, Ben Mitchell of the Christian Life Commission told CLC trustees.

Mitchell, CLC director of biomedical and life issues, warned CLC commissioners about the Human Genome Project during their meeting in Washington, D.C., March 4-5.

Mitchell said the genetic-engineering project has the potential for discovering cures for diseases with genetic origins. But the project is "a veritable Pandora's box," Mitchell added. "For every benefit the project might yield, there is the potential for abuse," Mitchell said.

Research for the \$3 billion project, funded by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Energy, is being done by scientists around the world, Mitchell said.

He pointed to several areas where abuses could take place:

- Denial of insurance coverage based on genetic predispositions.
- Issuing patents for human genes.
- Making profits from human genes.
- Misuse of tax money.

"We need to be better informed about it," Mitchell asserted. "This is one of the areas where we have the ability to shape policy."

Commissioners also heard an update on the 1993 CLC seminar, which will address genetic engineering along with other medical ethics concerns. The seminar, entitled "Life at Risk: Crises in Medical Ethics," will probe scientific technology and the Christian world view, abortion, fetal-tissue use, amniocentesis and sex selection, abstinence and safe sex, the abortion pill--RU486, the Human Genome Project, genetics, evolution and creation, the right to die, suicide, patient self-determination and living wills, HIV and AIDS.

Among the personalities asked to speak at the seminar are Charles Colson; J. C. Wilke, formerly of the National Right to Life; Francis Collins, co-discoverer of the cystic fibrosis gene; and Louis Sullivan, secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

During his report to commissioners, Richard Land, CLC executive director-treasurer, affirmed the CLC stance against homosexuality. Land and Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, wrote a letter to President Bush protesting a February meeting of Bush campaign manager Robert Mosbacher with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and an AIDS Action Council representative.

"You can't ride two horses," Land said. Some issues are mutually exclusive, and homosexual rights and family values are two of those, he asserted.

In other actions, commissioners approved a change in the CLC's program statement, which last December was enlarged to include religious-liberty concerns. The latest change, approved by the SBC Executive Committee in February, requires the CLC to consult with the Foreign Mission Board when expressing religious-liberty concerns to foreign governments.

Previously the FMB has represented the Southern Baptist Convention on religious-liberty matters overseas. The program change will be voted on at the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

Commissioners also voted to give Christian author and broadcaster James Dobson the CLC Distinguished Service Award.

Commissioners pushed their agenda ahead on March 5 to accommodate a previously unscheduled meeting with a United States Supreme Court justice. The justice agreed to the meeting on the condition that no tape recorders or cameras would be allowed. He also asked that his name not be revealed.

Commissioners and staff would not comment on record about the meeting.

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Renowned theologian calls for
emphasis on religious liberty

By Ron Chaney

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Evangelical Christians must lead in the cause of establishing religious liberty worldwide, said Carl F. H. Henry, evangelical theologian and author.

Henry spoke at the 25th annual Christian Life Commission seminar in Washington, D.C., March 2-4.

Evangelicals must focus on religious liberty because "this next decade may well witness an outbreak of anti-Christian hostility unprecedented since biblical times," Henry warned.

"The evangelical community must champion religious freedom for the entirety of mankind, while also welcoming that freedom to proclaim the gospel of free grace worldwide.

"The earnestness of evangelical commitment to religious liberty, and the full use of it, may be the critical test of the (evangelical) movement's spiritual and moral vitality in an increasingly neopagan society," he said.

Henry cited statistics showing that around 50 percent of the world's population lived under restraints on religious liberty before the fall of communism.

"Nothing attests the perversity of tyrannical governments more than the fact that, two millennia after Christ, tyrannical governments still widely thwart religious freedom of multitudes of human beings," he said.

"Despite the pride of the West in the technological achievements of modernity, religious intolerance and persecution remains a besetting evil of much of the contemporary world."

Although no religious tradition is innocent of intolerance of other groups, Henry said atheism has a worse record than others, "for atheism most of all has spawned the violent oppression and persecution of believers."

Christianity presently tops the list of persecuted religions, Henry said, mostly because of its global missionary presence.

Islamic Saudi Arabia stands out in its prohibition against Christians to practice their religion, he said. Restrictions placed on troops in Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield and the Gulf war is a small example, he said. Chaplains were required to call themselves "morale officers" and could not wear crosses.

"Something is terribly amiss," Henry commented, "when 500,000 men and women fight a war for liberty and freedom while at the same time they themselves are denied the very thing they are fighting for...."

But for Saudis the situation is worse. "A Saudi who converts from Islam to another religion is subject to execution -- usually by beheading or stoning, sometimes by crucifixion," Henry said.

At the heart of many political problems in the world lies religious intolerance, he said. "Talk of a 'new world order' is empty political talk unless the basic right of religious freedom is addressed in all nations of the world."

Henry marked other worldwide flash points where religious intolerance

needs extinguishing.

-- Egypt. "Christian converts from Islam who publicly profess their newfound faith have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned in an effort to persuade them to recant," he said.

-- Israel. "Jews are told that one cannot be a Jew and receive the same rights as other Jews if one believes in Jesus Christ," he noted. Israel is hostile towards evangelism, he said, when the government limits the number of Christian missionaries to pre-1948 numbers. Even within Judaism, Reform Jews charge that Orthodox Jews are intolerant of other forms of Judaism, he said.

-- China. The communist regime has cracked down on house churches and has imprisoned Christians, he said.

-- United States. "The constitutional assurance of free religious expression is increasingly subordinated to an exaggerated and distorted emphasis on religious non-establishment," he said.

Henry urged several Christian responses:

-- Pray for victims of religious persecution and the governments that oppress them.

-- Take interest in those victims and their families.

-- Protest religious discrimination.

-- Publicize accounts of religious-liberty violations.

-- Call for sanctions against governments which violate religious liberty.

-- Oppose American assistance -- both military and financial -- to governments that violate human rights.

-- Encourage the "depoliticization of foreign policy that allows material and military interests to cancel a deeper interest in human rights and duties...."

Henry also referred to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights as a means of emphasizing religious liberty worldwide.

"If in the present world a bold insistence on religious liberty is to arise as never before," he said, "it is the 35 million adult born-again Christians in America who ought now to take the lead by way of gratitude for their won inheritance and experience.

"If we in the West, and particularly in America, lose this opportunity to reverse the naturalistic tide, it will be devout Eastern Europeans who will be setting the example and teaching us.

"They have experienced the fragility of culture and know that losing a culture is not the same as losing God. Losing God is what we have most to fear, for if we lose him we shall inevitably lose the culture also, and ourselves as well."

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Hinson to leave Southern
for Richmond seminary

By Greg Warner and Marv Knox

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Saying he has reached "a point of saturation" with attacks against him, Glenn Hinson has decided to leave Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., after 30 years of teaching.

Hinson, professor of church history at Southern since 1962, is expected to be named professor of spirituality and church history at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.). Trustees of the Richmond seminary will be asked to approve Hinson's hiring when they meet April 6-7.

Hinson is not the only professor leaving Southern's church history department. Loyd Allen, an untenured associate professor of church history, submitted his resignation March 5 to become chairman of the department of

religion and philosophy at Mississippi College, a Baptist school in Clinton.

The departures of Hinson and Allen will mean four church history professors have left the school in a year. Only one professor remains in the department.

Hinson, 60, has been a favorite target of Southern Baptist fundamental-conservatives for more than a decade, particularly for his writings on the deity of Christ.

He became the focal point of an international controversy last October, when trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board discovered he was teaching temporarily at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, while on sabbatical from Southern.

Angry FMB trustees voted to cut all FMB funding of the Ruschlikon seminary, sparking a dispute between Baptists in Europe and America that FMB administrators say "has brought crisis to our world mission program."

Although Hinson, his faculty colleagues at Southern, and others have denied charges that Hinson is a liberal, trustee leaders at Southern issued a vague "warning" in February, indicating Hinson would be "in jeopardy of dismissal" if he teaches the views that some have accused him of teaching. The specific charges were not defined publicly.

Hinson told Associated Baptist Press March 6 the warning, issued by Southern's trustee executive committee, was the last straw.

"That kind of thing reaches a point of saturation," he said from Oxford, England. "I've just had it up to here with the attacks."

"If you take it (the warning) at face value, it is a very ominous statement that is intended to determine what I am doing in the classroom," he said.

Hinson said trustees at Southern "are more interested in indoctrination than in education now."

"An educator and education requires freedom," he said. "Under the present board of trustees, it is impossible to exercise the kind of freedom that is necessary in the classroom, in writing or anything else one might do."

Southern Provost Larry McSwain disagreed. "I haven't seen any evidence of trustee intervention in the classroom," he said.

McSwain added, however, there is more trustee scrutiny of what a professor writes or says in public, such as Hinson's 1977 book that has been the basis for all trustee complaints. "There probably is less freedom to be controversial," the provost said.

McSwain suggested Hinson may have "misinterpreted" the warning issued by trustee leaders recently, which McSwain said was not a threat but a purposely "ambiguous" statement "designed to close the door" on past accusations.

According to McSwain, the warning said that if Hinson were teaching what he had been accused of teaching, he would have been in violation of the seminary's governing theological document and subject to dismissal. However, McSwain added, Hinson was misinterpreted by his critics. "If they had interpreted him correctly, he would be in violation," McSwain said.

Hinson said the dispute over his teaching at Ruschlikon was related to the warning issued by Southern. Both were "part of a carefully orchestrated series of attacks on me," he said, noting the same charges and quotations from his writings were used in both instances.

"On the positive side," Hinson continued, "the Baptist Seminary at Richmond offers an opportunity to continue the heritage that we have known as Southern Seminary."

"I think there are very important things that the (Richmond) seminary can be for the future. Baptists in the South are undergoing a reforming. And Richmond will play an important role in that whole process."

The Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond opened last fall with about 30 students. The faculty is composed primarily of former professors at

Southern Baptist seminaries.

Thomas Graves, president of the Richmond seminary, described Hinson as "a world-renowned scholar who will bring to this young school a wealth of experience, wisdom and most importantly an attentiveness to matters of the spirit."

Hinson's primary responsibility will be to develop and teach courses, retreats and other experiences for students in the area of spirituality and worship.

"I like what Tom Graves has proposed as a vision for the seminary that makes spirituality a very important part of the training of ministers," Hinson said.

Hinson has spent his sabbatic leave teaching and studying in Switzerland and England. He spent the fall teaching at Ruschlikon and completing the manuscript for a new textbook. He since has been lecturing in England and working on two other book manuscripts. He plans to return to the States in April and begin teaching in Richmond in the fall.

Loyd Allen's resignation was announced March 5 in the same faculty meeting in which Southern professors received a press release regarding Hinson's departure. But Allen said his decision to take the Mississippi College post was not dependent on Hinson's.

"Had he decided to stay or go, that would not have made a difference in my decision," said Allen, who will begin his new job in August.

Allen, 40, acknowledged the stresses of controversy at Southern Seminary played some part in his decision to leave, but he said Mississippi College also offers numerous attractions.

"Any time you go toward a job, the context of the job you're leaving matters," he said. "There has been considerable stress at Southern Seminary; that's not news. That's a factor in my decision, but it's only one factor in interpreting my call to Mississippi College."

In addition to chairing the department of religion and philosophy at the Mississippi Baptist school, Allen will teach courses in New Testament, Old Testament and church history, his academic specialty.

In departing, Allen had positive words for Southern Seminary. "I leave with a sense of support for the faculty and administration of Southern Seminary and a sense of hope about the future of this institution," he noted. "I do care about this school. I would continue to recommend students to this school."

The only remaining church history professor at Southern is Charles Scalise, an assistant professor who was transferred recently from a position in the area of supervised ministry.

Others who have left recently are Bill Leonard, who became chairman of the religion department at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., in January, and Karen Smith, who left last July to teach at South Wales Baptist College and the University of Wales.

Hinson said the loss of most of the church history faculty "certainly creates a major problem" for Southern. He predicted it will cause problems with the seminary's accreditation and make it "very difficult to maintain the level of scholarship and teaching that we have had at the department."

Hinson said it will be hard for Southern to find new history professors who will meet the approval of trustees.

"This is just my personal opinion, but the fundamentalists simply do not have recognized scholars who are respected (in scholarly circles)," Hinson said. "Most of them are negatively regarded because of the way they let dogma determine history, instead of letting history speak for itself."

"I feel very pained about leaving the seminary," Hinson concluded. "A chunk of my heart will stay at Southern."

McSwain agreed Southern won't be able to hire recognized, established scholars to replace those leaving, but he added: "It would be my judgment

that we will probably do what we did in 1961 when we added Glenn Hinson to our faculty. We had a vacancy in the church history department and we found a bright, young scholar with promise, an individual who needed to be given a chance."

In 1961 Southern replaced 13 professors who were fired in a dispute with administrators.

"I would not agree there are not qualified, capable people who can be approved by trustees and who can do an outstanding job teaching and rebuilding the church history department at Southern Seminary," McSwain said. "I wish we didn't have to do that. But we did it in 1961. Maybe there is another Glenn Hinson out there...who is a conservative."

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House subcommittee explores
broad abortion-rights legislation

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- If the U.S. Supreme Court jettisons the legal right to an abortion, will Congress step in and restore it?

A House subcommittee explored this question and more at a March 4 hearing on a broad abortion-rights bill that supporters said simply would codify Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 ruling recognizing a woman's right to privacy in abortion decisions.

However, opponents of the Freedom of Choice Act of 1991 (H.R. 25) said the bill goes beyond the rights bestowed in Roe.

The one-page bill, sponsored by Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., says that "a state may not restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy before fetal viability; or at any time, if such termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman."

Fetal viability is the point at which doctors believe a fetus would be able to live outside the womb.

Edwards, chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, said "the bill's language has been written specifically to track the language in the Roe vs. Wade decision itself.

"The significance of this bill needs little explanation to either side," Edwards continued. "By agreeing to hear the case, Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey, the Supreme Court has moved closer to overturning or severely limiting Roe vs. Wade. Both sides agree that this case calls on the court to address the scope of constitutional protection for abortion rights."

Six witnesses -- including one woman and a Bush administration representative -- testified before the subcommittee.

Timothy Flanigan, a representative of the U.S. Department of Justice, said the administration strongly opposes H.R. 25 as a matter of policy. The bill "would enact a federal statutory regime of abortion regulation that leaves the states with substantially less regulatory authority than they now have under Roe and its successor cases," Flanigan said.

"We are opposed as a matter of federalism to the attempt to dictate consensus on this issue through the mechanism of federal legislation," Flanigan said. "Absent a constitutional amendment, the question of abortion rights should, in our view, be left to the states."

Flanigan said the administration believes that the bill is broader than Roe because it identifies the woman's life and health as the exclusive basis for abortion regulation without recognizing important state interests endorsed by the Supreme Court, such as the potentiality of human life, the

family unit and parental authority.

Flanigan referred to a letter by Attorney General William Barr to Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., that criticized H.R. 25 and its companion bill (S. 25) as imposing on all 50 states an unprecedented rule of abortion on demand, going well beyond Roe. Barr told Hyde that he would recommend the president veto the bill if approved by Congress.

President George Bush has promised to veto any legislation that weakens current abortion restrictions and so far has made good on that pledge. Speaking to the National Association of Evangelicals March 3, Bush vowed that the Freedom of Choice Act "will not become law as long as I am president of the United States of America."

Another witness, Richard Blumenthal, supported a federal pro-choice statute. Blumenthal, attorney general of Connecticut, told the panel that his state was the first to pass similar pro-choice legislation.

Blumenthal, a law clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun who wrote the majority opinion in Roe, said: "The ability of a woman to control her procreative capacity is fundamental to her rights to privacy and to equality. Women cannot hope to participate as equals in society without being free to make their own decisions about whether and when to bear children.

"A federal role is appropriate when such an important right is involved."

Other witnesses debated Congress' constitutional authority to enact statutory protection for the reproductive rights of women. While witnesses agreed that the Constitution does not empower Congress to legislate "constitutional" rights as a means of circumventing the Supreme Court, they differed on whether or not enumerated powers of Congress provide legislators the authority to approve "statutory" rights in areas of legitimate national concern.

In light of Bush's pledge and his record of 24 vetoes without an override, the future of abortion-rights legislation is uncertain. But one thing remains evident, the Supreme Court's anticipated decision this summer -- regardless of the outcome -- will deepen the fissure between abortion rights advocates and opponents.

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Contradictory signals sent
on church-reporting plan

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Bush administration continues to send contradictory signals about whether it still supports its proposal to require churches to report to the Internal Revenue Service those donors who give more than \$500 annually.

The latest round of confusion over the administration's position came March 5 when top Treasury Department officials told representatives of religious and other non-profit organizations the proposal definitely was off the table. The same day, White House Chief of Staff Samuel Skinner told the New York Times that the proposal is not dead and remains under consideration.

Representatives of six major religious bodies and two other non-profit organizations left the meeting with Treasury officials persuaded the administration had abandoned the proposal.

"Mr. Fred Goldberg, the Treasury Department's top tax official, assured us that the reporting proposal as it applies to religious organizations is off the table," said Oliver Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, one of the religious groups who met with Treasury officials.

"He agreed with us that government has no business meddling in religious

affairs or forcing churches to act as agents of the government," Thomas added.

Asked later about Skinner's remarks, Goldberg told Thomas he would put the Treasury Department's position on the matter in writing.

Other groups meeting with Treasury officials were the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the National Council of Churches, the United States Catholic Conference, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, Independent Sector and the Free Congress Foundation.

"It is dismaying to hear diametrically contradictory reports from the two leading members of the presidents's staff about an issue of great concern to churches," said Dean Kelley, counselor on religious liberty for the National Council of Churches. "We would welcome an assurance from the president that this matter has been finally put to rest."

Besides contradicting the Treasury Department's stance, Skinner's remarks appear to be at odds with Vice President Dan Quayle's Feb. 23 statement calling the proposal "nonsense" and saying that it "is not going to have our support."

Opposition from church groups has been virtually unanimous. James Dunn, BJC executive director, rebutted reports that the administration's apparent abandonment of the proposal was in response to conservative groups.

"It is distressing that the White House doesn't have its act together on this issue, and it is patent foolishness to attribute the concern of religious groups to the Religious Right," Dunn said. "The first groups to call this matter to public attention and to call upon the Treasury Department to pull down the proposal were mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations.

"The debate is over a matter of constitutional principle, not politics of the left or right."

Brent Walker, associate general counsel at the BJC, expressed surprise that Skinner considered the proposal viable after hearing Treasury officials say it was dead.

"Skinner's vacillation on what the vice president has called 'nonsense' and the assistant secretary of the Treasury dubbed a 'flawed' proposal is unbelievable," he said. "In the heat of the primary season the White House seems to be playing politics instead of pursuing principle."

The administration proposed the reporting requirement in its 1993 budget package to help IRS catch taxpayers who overclaim the amount of charitable contributions. The Treasury Department indicated the proposal would help IRS distinguish between gifts to churches and other charitable organizations, which are deductible, and payments for goods or services, which are not.

Churches and their related organizations are exempted under current law from filing annual reports (Form 990) that are required of most tax-exempt organizations that receive tax-deductible gifts.

Religious groups complain that the proposal's requirement that churches report donors and determine the potential deductibility of gifts would create excessive entanglement between church and state. They also say the proposal would create an enormous record-keeping burden for churches.

-- By Larry Chesser

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