

is not simply flag waving; it comes as a result of the tortured path traveled by a Supreme Court at war with itself in the form of convoluted rulings -- many times, with four or five overlapping if not incomprehensible companion opinions."

During debate, the committee approved three amendments and defeated seven others.

One amendment, offered by Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., added language about minors. The provision, approved 19-14, stipulates that a state could require a minor to involve a parent, guardian or other responsible adult before having an abortion, but any state that imposes this condition must allow for confidential and expeditious exceptions.

Rep. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., said that the amendment could open the door for involvement of almost anyone, including abortion clinic workers or a boyfriend. Parents should be involved in such a decision, he said, offering a substitute motion that was defeated 16-19.

Edwards countered that in some circumstances, such as incest, parents shouldn't be involved.

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colo., said she wished all families were healthy and safe, but imposing "a Norman Rockwell family" on everybody is denying reality.

There are dysfunctional families, Hyde said, but eroding the fabric between the child and parent is not the answer. Denying parental consent and notification is just another assault on the American family, he added.

The bill provides a clause allowing individuals conscientiously opposed to abortion to decline from participation in them. Another Edwards-sponsored amendment added language to allow private health-care institutions, such as Baptist hospitals, to adopt policies against performance of abortions in their facilities.

Rep. James Sensenbrenner Jr., R-Wis., offered a substitute to include public facilities as well. Sensenbrenner's amendment failed 17-18; Edwards' provision prevailed 31-4.

The other successful amendment, offered by Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., added a clause to reinforce the intention of the act. The amendment, approved by voice vote, states the purpose of the act is to limit states' power to restrict abortion, re-establishing the strict scrutiny standard of review articulated in Roe and applied in subsequent cases from 1973 to 1988.

Strict scrutiny is the highest protection the Supreme Court affords for fundamental constitutional rights, such as speech.

Rejected amendments included provisions for informed consent and a waiting period, as well as stipulations that only licensed medical doctors could perform abortions and that a woman could not have an abortion in the third trimester except to save her life.

Another exchange between Schroeder and Hyde occurred during debate on informed consent. Schroeder, who opposed the amendment, said American women believe they are adults who don't need to be lectured to in an insulting manner.

"Don't you want people to have a choice?" Hyde responded. "How can you have a choice and not know what (your options) are. Talk about a gag rule!"

Informed consent goes beyond medical evidence and "we all know that," Schroeder said.

"If you cared about women as much as you care about abortion, you would be for informed consent," Hyde said.

"I think I care about women," Schroeder, the only woman on the 35-member committee, retorted.

Jesse Helms urges SBC
not to condemn Masonry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Sen. Jesse Helms, a conservative Republican from North Carolina, has thrown himself into the fray between some Southern Baptist conservatives and the Masonic Lodge.

In a letter published in the May issue of the Scottish Rite Journal, Helms warns that if the Southern Baptist Convention takes a stand opposing Freemasonry it would bring "great harm" to the SBC.

The SBC is set to consider in June whether or not to accept a Home Mission Board report that says some elements of Freemasonry are "not compatible with Christianity" but that individual Baptists should be free to decide whether or not to become Masons.

That report was done after Larry Holly, a Texas physician, made a motion targeting Freemasonry at last year's annual SBC meeting.

Helms writes: "I have reached the firm conclusion, both as a Southern Baptist and as a 33rd degree Scottish Rite Mason, that far too much has been made of the wrong-headed, albeit sincere, obsession of a Texas Baptist that prompted him to launch a false and unfair vendetta against Freemasonry."

Helms notes that he has been a Southern Baptist since childhood and has served two SBC churches as deacon and Sunday school teacher. The senator also has been a Mason for 45 years, he adds.

Helms recommends that messengers to this year's SBC "give Dr. Holly's motion a quick and quiet demise."

"Many hotheaded 'liberals' have gone ballistic since their having been deposed from their longtime control of the Southern Baptist Convention," Helms writes. "It would be unfortunate if Dr. Holly allows himself to be used by these angry people, resulting in great harm to the Southern Baptist Convention."

Holly, a conservative, told Associated Baptist Press that Helms' charge that he is being used by SBC liberals is "absurd." Rather, Masonry and liberals are allies, Holly said, and Helms, by supporting the Masons, has linked himself with "those who hate everything Jesus Christ stands for."

Holly called Freemasonry "one of the great evils in Southern Baptist life." Yet he denied that he is on a vendetta against the Masons, and asked, "Why is the Lodge's hostility to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God not a vendetta?"

He also disputed Helms' charge that anti-Mason action by Southern Baptists will harm the SBC.

"No one is hurt by the truth," he said. "The only harm comes from a lie, and in this case the lies are coming from the Masonic Lodge, and unfortunately from those who are in its debt."

Freemasonry is a secretive organization known publicly for its benevolent activities but whose private pursuits involve elaborate rituals and oaths and devotion to an eclectic quest for higher knowledge.

Holly and other critics insist those private practices are inspired by pagan rituals and occultism and comprise a religion that competes with Christianity by convincing well-intentioned men that good deeds -- not faith in Jesus -- can get them to heaven.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: ABP will update the following story as soon as possible.

Yeary offered pastorate
of North Phoenix church

By Greg Warner

PHOENIX, Ariz. (ABP) -- Dan Yeary of Miami has been asked to become pastor of the 23,000-member North Phoenix Baptist Church, the largest Southern Baptist congregation in the West.

If he accepts, Yeary will succeed Richard Jackson, one of Southern Baptists' most popular pulpiteers, was pastor of the Phoenix, Ariz., church for 25 years. Yeary, 52, has been pastor of the 4,000-member University Baptist Church in the Miami suburb of Coral Gables for 20 years.

Phoenix church members who heard Yeary preach Wednesday, May 19, voted overwhelmingly by ballot to call him as pastor. Before the vote, however, he told the church he would not respond to an invitation for several days. He was traveling May 20 and unavailable for comment.

A Texas native, Yeary is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Texas.

Jackson, 54, retired from the pastorate in January and was named pastor emeritus by the church. But he has continued his preaching ministry, leading crusades and revivals around the country and directing the Richard Jackson Center for Preaching and Evangelism, a private, non-profit organization located on the campus of Grand Canyon College in Phoenix.

Jackson became a prominent figure in the SBC controversy in 1987 and 1988, when he drew the support of Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives in two unsuccessful bids for the SBC presidency.

North Phoenix Church, which had only 200 members when Jackson became pastor in 1967, built its current 40-acre facility in the 1980s. The congregation has been a consistent statistical leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, topping the list for both the number of baptisms and contributions to the SBC budget, the Cooperative Program.

Yeary's tenure at University Church bears some similarity. Under his leadership, the church grew from 300 members in 1973 to approximately 4,000, during a period when population changes produced a 25 percent drop in Baptist membership in Miami.

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-- By Greg Warner

Fellowship leaders affirm
leadership roles for women

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship pledged May 12 to give women places of leadership within the organization and to encourage churches to do the same.

The Fellowship's Coordinating Council, meeting just prior to the organization's annual general assembly in Birmingham, Ala., passed a statement affirming women in leadership.

The statement notes that "women have been and are now excluded from leadership roles both in the (Southern Baptist) denominational structure and

the local church."

The affirmation, which passed with little discussion or opposition, was offered by council member Linda Bridges, assistant professor of New Testament at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.).

In introducing the statement, Bridges said, "These are not good times for Baptist women."

She alluded to recent criticism of Southern Baptists' mission-support auxiliary, Woman's Missionary Union, and to a statement by Albert Mohler, president-elect of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, that he and most Southern Baptist churches are opposed to women as pastors.

Although the council's statement did not mention women serving as pastors, it defended their inclusion in leadership roles, noting: the Bible affirms "the joyous participation of women in the church"; Jesus treated women as "full and equal partners"; women were leaders in early Christian churches; and "limitations placed on women in the first-century world were those of the culture and not the moving of the Holy Spirit."

Although passed by the Coordinating Council, the Fellowship's most powerful committee, the statement was not presented to the May 13-15 general assembly because the Fellowship's structure discourages resolutions or position statements.

However, Fellowship participants expressed their opinion in a 1991 survey that showed 94 percent favor women's ordination. The survey did not specifically ask about women as pastors.

The Fellowship is an organization of moderate Southern Baptists opposed to the conservative shift in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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-- By Greg Warner

Carter urges students
to put faith in action

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Former President Jimmy Carter urged Baptist college and seminary students May 14 to put their faith into action by serving the poor and others in need.

"I hope that you'll be bold and aggressive and courageous and exemplify your faith in Christ," he told about 200 students in an open forum in Birmingham, Ala.

Most of the students were attending the general assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center, where Carter delivered a keynote address the night before.

A lifelong Southern Baptist and now a member of the Fellowship, Carter suggested the students volunteer in depressed areas. "Go with a Christ-like attitude that these people are equal to me," he added.

Carter's wife, Rosalyn, who also met with the students, suggested they volunteer in local schools. "Take those little children and let them know that you care about them," she urged.

"There are so many things that young people can do," she said.

The former president said he would like to see the Fellowship establish a committee on human-rights abuses.

While in the White House, Carter said, his foreign policy was based on promoting human rights. He has continued that commitment through his international work with the Carter Center of Atlanta. He said he would use his foreign contacts to help the Fellowship on human-rights issues.

Carter said the Fellowship should cooperate, not compete, with the

Southern Baptist Convention. And he called on the young people to help bridge the gap between the two organizations.

Carter addressed topics stretching from gays in the military to women in ministry:

-- Homosexuality. "I don't know how Christ looked upon homosexual acts," Carter said, but he noted Christ was against people judging one another.

When questioned about his position on homosexuals in the armed forces and in the ministry, Carter said, "The gays should be treated equally." The decision on whether homosexuals should be ordained is up to each church.

-- Health-care reform. Carter said he favors a universal health-care program as long as families are able to choose their own doctors. He supports a program that will focus on preventive medicine instead of long, costly hospital stays.

-- AIDS. Christians should treat people with AIDS the same as Jesus treated lepers, Carter said. "I think we should reach out to AIDS patients and let them know they are loved."

-- Women in ministry. Carter said he supports women as ministers. Only God knows and recognizes all of women's talents, he said.

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-- By Rachel Dwyer

King James still reigns
but audience aging

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- The King James Version of the Bible remains the most popular translation in America, but its strong influence could die out within the near future as adults who are now over age 65 pass on.

That's the finding of a new nationwide poll on Bible-reading habits of Americans by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif.

Nearly one-third of American adults claim they still prefer the King James translation, which was authorized by King James of England and published in 1611. The only other translation preferred by more than 5 percent of the population is the modern New International Version.

However, the season for King James' reign may be passing. Sales of the New International Version recently surpassed the KJV.

According to the Barna study, use of the King James peaks with adults over age 65, with 45 percent of that age group reading the KJV.

Among 47- to 65-year-olds, 35 percent prefer the KJV, as do 33 percent of baby boomers. But the popularity of the KJV declines precipitously among "baby busters" -- adults 18-27 years old -- with only 18 percent preferring the KJV.

Younger generations who are cool to the formal tone of the King James turn to a variety of other translations. And many baby busters don't know what translation they read.

"Recent marketing efforts emphasizing 'specialty' Bibles over specific translations may also be making Bible readers less conscious of what translation they are reading," noted George Barna, president of Barna Research Group.

Other findings from the poll:

-- More women than men regularly read the Bible (54 percent to 36 percent).

-- Bible reading declines as income levels increase, from 54 percent of those earning less than \$20,000 annually to 30 percent of those earning more than \$60,000.

-- Only 15 percent of Americans who do not attend church read the Bible once or more per week, compared with 54 percent of regular churchgoers.

-- Christians identified as "born again" -- those who say they will go to heaven when they die because they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ -- are most likely to read the Bible regularly. Among this group, 72 percent read the Bible regularly and 18 percent read it daily.

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