

Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner
Associate Editor: Bob Allen
Phone: (904) 262-6626
Fax: (904) 262-7745

February 27, 1995

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Baylor chooses Truett dean, Robert Sloan, as president**
- **Pastor fired after confronting HMB president at public meeting**
- **Moyers says politics prompts Baptist opposition to Foster**

Baylor chooses Truett dean, Robert Sloan, as president

By Greg Warner

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University has chosen the dean of its new seminary, Robert B. Sloan, as the university's next president.

Sloan, 46, was elected by Baylor's board of regents Feb. 24. He will succeed Herbert Reynolds, who will retire and become Baylor's chancellor June 1.

Sloan's election culminates a tumultuous 18-month search for Reynolds' successor. Last November the regents were poised to elect Samford University President Thomas Corts to the post but voted down the recommendation of their search committee.

Sloan's election brought no such drama. The 36 regents, deeply divided three months ago, met "harmoniously" Feb. 23-24 to interview five finalists and quickly agreed on Sloan, Reynolds reported.

Regents' chairman Gale Galloway said a strong consensus developed for Sloan, who reportedly was not a candidate in the earlier search, and the board was united in his selection. No vote count was announced.

Unlike Corts, Sloan is well-known to Texas Baptists and Baylor graduates. A native of Coleman, Texas, Sloan holds a bachelor's degree from Baylor and taught theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 90 miles north in Fort Worth, before helping launch Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Truett Seminary opened in the fall of 1994 with 50 students and six faculty members.

Sloan also earned a master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and doctorate in theology from the University of Basel, Switzerland.

Sloan said he is humbled by his selection to lead the 12,000-student school, the world's largest Baptist university. He will be the 12th president of the 150-year-old school.

"It's the kind of job I think you don't choose," he told the Dallas Morning News. "Somehow, in the providence of God, it chooses you."

Last November the search committee resigned after failing to elect Corts, who lacked any ties to Baylor and Texas and was perceived by some critics as too closely aligned with Baptist fundamentalists.

Although Baylor and Truett seminary are considered aligned with Baptist moderates, Sloan is a biblical conservative. He served as one of several editors of the New American Commentary, the series based on biblical

inerrancy and published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. But he resigned that role in protest, saying the commentary had fallen victim to denominational politics.

After his election, Sloan affirmed Baylor's Baptist heritage. "I want to affirm academic excellence in the framework of a Christian world view," he told the Dallas newspaper. "That is our mission statement and it's something I take very seriously."

Some Baylor officials reportedly are concerned about hiring a Baptist pastor to lead the multifaceted university, which in recent years has distanced itself from the Baptist General Convention of Texas because of fears of a fundamentalist takeover. But others say Sloan's academic commitment is sound.

"I am an academic who preaches," Sloan said. "Yes, I am an ordained Baptist minister, but I've spent the last 16 years of my life in higher education. I have, I think, a well-established record of research in publishing. I've spent the bulk of my time in teaching and academic work."

"I think really it was the opportunity for the regents to have someone who has an academic resume, but someone who can also engender trust among Texas Baptists."

Sloan and his wife, Sue, have seven children, two of whom are Baylor students.

-30-

Pastor fired after confronting HMB president at public meeting

By Bob Allen

· THERIOT, La. (ABP) -- A Louisiana mission pastor has been fired after publicly confronting Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis over Lewis' endorsement of the controversial "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document.

Jerry Moser, 42, was dismissed as pastor of Bayou DuLarge Baptist Mission Church in Theriot, La., by the missions committee of the sponsoring church, Christ Baptist Church of Houma, for "insubordination."

The pastor of the sponsoring church said he agreed with some of Moser's criticisms but disagreed with the way he chose to address them.

"I also have a problem with Larry Lewis signing this document," said Lynn Fontenot, pastor of Christ Baptist Church. But the way Moser confronted Lewis was "demeaning and humiliating," Fontenot said.

In a letter addressed to "associated churches," Moser described confronting Lewis at an associational world missions conference held at his church Feb. 10.

The missions conference in the heavily Catholic section of Louisiana was scheduled more than a year ago, before Lewis and another Southern Baptist Convention leader, Richard Land of the SBC Christian Life Commission, signed the document last March pledging cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics.

Lewis and Land were among 40 original signers of the document, drafted by a coalition to highlight areas of common concern for both conservative Catholics and Protestants.

Baptist critics of the document say it embraces heresy by affirming Catholic doctrine and undermines evangelism with its ban on proselytization. Defenders say that theological differences should not prevent evangelicals and Catholics from working together on common social and moral concerns and that the proselytization ban does not prevent evangelicals from trying to convert non-practicing or nominal Catholics.

Moser's letter said his church met "for over 12 hours" before deciding to "confront Dr. Lewis and not allow him to speak until he had a chance to hear us and consider how he is hurting us with this heretical document."

The mission tried to set up a meeting with Lewis prior to the missions conference, but Lewis' schedule would not permit it. During the associational meeting, when Lewis' turn came on the program, Moser said he "assumed complete control of the meeting."

"I gave everyone the option to leave or stay, but I insisted that we would address publicly a serious problem," he wrote in his letter.

Moser and four other church members spoke. Most visitors from other churches were sympathetic toward Lewis but were not allowed to join the dialogue, he said.

Lewis responded by giving his personal testimony and describing leading people to a personal faith in Christ but "steadfastly refused to repent," Moser said.

The discussion was carried on "in calmness and love," Moser said in his letter. "Our men pleaded with Dr. Lewis to hear us: there were no shows of fleshly anger by any who spoke to him."

Fontenot differed with that assessment. While Moser spoke calmly, "even in the calmness there was a mean-spiritedness," he said. One church member "was very loud and abusive," Fontenot said, pointing a finger in Lewis' face and calling him a heretic.

Lewis was told he would not be permitted to speak from the pulpit and one man told him, "'You're no brother of mine, I don't even think you're saved,'" Fontenot said.

Critics of Moser's actions point out that Lewis had agreed to talk with pastors in the association at breakfast the morning after the missions rally. Moser was "instrumental" in setting up that meeting, said Steve Mooneyham, the associational director of missions, and could have aired his concerns in a less-public manner there.

But Moser said in an interview he believes open confrontation of wrongdoing is biblical, quoting I Timothy 5:19 and Galatians 2:11-21. "We chose to take the most public route," he said.

"Personally I would have felt hypocritical to allow him to preach on, pat him on the back and have a meeting later on to tell him I didn't like what he had done," Moser said.

Lewis was unavailable for comment Feb. 27.

In his letter, Moser said that most recent converts in his church come from either Catholic or Episcopalian backgrounds, both which officially teach "baptismal regeneration."

"These new believers have left behind their faith in sacraments as the means to obtain salvation and have to come to trust in Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone," he said. "All of our people have family members still caught up in trusting their church and its sacraments to obtain for them eternal life."

The "Evangelical and Catholics Together" document errs with its claim that "Baptists and Catholics are on the same mission, preaching the same gospel," Moser charged. "If that is truly so, then there is no reason to continue to support the ongoing evangelistic work of this mission or any other Baptist mission in south Louisiana, or in Central and South America. These areas have already been heavily 'evangelized' by Roman Catholicism."

Another section of the document, he noted, describes "those converted -- whether understood as having received the new birth for the first time or having experienced the reawakening of the new birth originally bestowed in the sacrament of baptism."

"Is this not saying that we believe in baptismal regeneration; that sprinkling a baby with water will somehow give him the 'new birth?'" Moser wrote.

"I can hardly believe Drs. Larry Lewis and Richard Land could believe this. I thought the convention just went through a fight to get rid of liberal leaders."

Fontenot said Moser was fired by the sponsoring church from his staff position as mission pastor not just for confronting Lewis but for a history of insubordination. "What we're looking at with the incident with Larry Lewis is really the tip of the iceberg," said Fontenot.

Moser regularly ignored policies over the course of several years, Fontenot said. The missions committee, he said, became "just tired of dealing with Jerry Moser in this capacity."

"I don't buy that," Moser countered. He said he has been a mission pastor for most of his ministry since 1973. "I don't think I have a history -- I think others would verify it -- of being obstinate and uncooperative," he said.

Fontenot said he has received correspondence from SBC leaders urging him to reconcile with Moser. One letter from a Home Mission Board director, warned that accounts of the episode would be distributed and advised, "If you want to be viewed on the right side of this issue, you need to make up with Jerry," Fontenot said.

"I don't like that," he said. "I think it's an overt threat."

Another letter came from Fred Wolfe, an Alabama pastor and chairman of the SBC Executive Committee. "Why Fred Wolfe would be concerned about Jerry Moser I have no idea, but I don't appreciate it," Fontenot said. "This is an in-house problem," he said.

Mooneyham, the director of missions, said Lewis' and Land's decision to sign the Evangelical and Catholics document was unpopular among many pastors in the association, where the population is predominantly Catholic.

"There are a number of folks who do have concerns about the document but nevertheless were not pleased with the manner in which this was dealt with," Mooneyham said.

"I'm of the understanding that in the association there will be a move to extend a formal apology to Dr. Lewis," said Mooneyham.

Asked if he regretted his actions, Moser said, "I was thinking about having another missions rally and asking Dr. Land to come."

"I'm not a very bold or brave person," Moser said. "Most of my life I've been a coward. But I'm tired of being a coward when it comes to the gospel."

-30-

Moyers says politics prompts Baptist opposition to Foster

WASHINGTON -- A "political posse" has captured the nation's largest Protestant denomination, NBC Nightly News commentator Bill Moyers said in a Feb. 23 broadcast.

Moyers, a Southern Baptist, offered his analysis one day after two Southern Baptist leaders publicly announced their opposition to the nomination of Henry Foster as surgeon general.

At a Nashville, Tenn., press conference, Jim Henry, SBC president, and Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, cited the denomination's opposition to abortion as the reason they oppose the nomination. Foster has performed at least 39 abortions during his career.

In his commentary, Moyers underscored the bedrock Baptist belief in the priesthood of the believer, saying that the "free exercise of conscience is the heart of the faith."

He continued: "No one can speak for all Baptists. But in the last decade, the Southern Baptist Convention was captured by a political posse allied with the Republican Party. Their hierarchy wants to impose conformity on the churches.

"Suddenly, the 39 legal abortions performed by Henry Foster, which he says he did reluctantly, are a theological sin and a political opportunity."

Moyers pointed out that Southern Baptists are "a motley crowd" that counts among its membership President Bill Clinton, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, evangelist Pat Robertson, Vice President Al Gore and ABC newsman Sam Donaldson.

"Despite studies showing Southern Baptists hold varying opinions about abortion," Moyers said, "the hierarchy has pronounced all 15 million of them opposed to Foster's nomination. The irony is that Henry Foster, M.D., himself a Baptist, has been a life-long crusader against teen-age pregnancy and probably more successful at preaching abstinence than a dozen doctors of theology.

"But when God becomes a partisan, religion becomes unforgiving and all subtlety excommunicated."

Moyers said that God "reads only the human heart, and looks with mercy on mortals like Henry Foster making hard choices in the anguished trenches of life. Would God then vote yea or nay on the nomination? I don't know. And neither does any other Baptist."

Land was unavailable for comment Feb. 27.

Conservative critics say Foster knowingly cooperated with the government's now-infamous Tuskegee experiments in which black men were infected with syphilis and left untreated. The charge "is offensive," Foster said. "It is dead wrong. And it is without substance."

As president of the Macon County Medical Society in 1972, he said he immediately called on the society to find these men and secure treatment for them after he became aware that such experiments had occurred.

He said he went to Alabama because he wanted to improve the medical care of poor people in the rural South. "Why would I have turned my back on the very people I had come to serve? ... All I ask is that I be allowed to tell the truth of who I am, what I have done, and what I believe."

Foster's position on abortion drew criticism from Southern Baptist leaders Jim Henry and Richard Land at a Feb. 22 press conference in Nashville. Henry, president of the 15 million-member denomination, and Land, executive director of its Christian Life Commission, said Foster's admission he performed 39 abortions is cause for Southern Baptists to oppose his nomination.

But two groups recently came to Foster's defense.

Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said Foster's pro-choice position is the sole reason for strident opposition from extremist Religious Right groups.

Groups such as the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America are "clearly trying to impose a narrow, theological litmus test on the nominee," Lynn wrote in a Feb. 17 letter to Clinton.

Lynn urged the administration not to apply a "religious test" to the nation's highest medical office. The U.S. Constitution explicitly forbids the use of religious tests for those seeking public office.

"Americans United believes that the only tests that should be applied to Dr. Foster are his qualifications and competence. On both counts, he has met the necessary criteria."

Foster's nomination also garnered support from the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. -- the nation's largest African-American denomination -- which recently announced its endorsement of the nominee. Officials of the Progressive National Baptist Convention are joining with others to solicit support for Foster, according to news reports.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

U.S. aid efforts saving children, report says

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- U.S. assistance helps save more than 4 million young lives annually, according to a report issued Feb. 20.

Two national anti-hunger research organizations released the report assessing U.S. efforts in helping to prevent child deaths in the developing world. The report, "Putting Children First," examines the effectiveness of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Child Survival Programs in 1991.

The report, published jointly by RESULTS Educational Fund and Bread for the World Institute, indicates U.S. assistance has contributed to the immunization of 80 percent of the world's children. The U.S. also has helped expand preventive therapy to combat dehydration to nearly half of all poor families in the developing world.

Between 1988 and 1994, U.S. assistance helped save the lives of 3.5 million Egyptian children from acute respiratory infections. In India, U.S. assistance contributed to the prevention of nearly 70,000 infant deaths a year.

"We can be very proud of the leadership role the United States has played over the past decade in the child survival revolution," said Sam Harris, executive director of RESULTS Educational Fund. "We must not turn back now."

But the report also points out some weak areas. It criticizes USAID for overbearing administrative red tape, hiring expensive consultants and restrictive "Buy American" rules that raise costs and take money away from service delivery. Some activities that counted as child survival in 1991 did not match the congressional child-survival mandate, it says.

For example, child-survival resources were used to fund the improvement of math skills among Bolivian school children and to fund microenterprise development in Nicaragua. While the report acknowledges these as valuable activities, it criticizes counting them as child-survival programs.

The report recommends increasing funding for child-survival activities, which now account for less than 5 percent of all non-military foreign aid. It says more resources should be channeled to grass-roots groups in recipient countries that have learned to mobilize community participation, and that USAID should continue efforts to reduce the paperwork burden.

"Let there be no misunderstanding," said David Beckmann, Bread for the World's president. "We are firmly committed to the child-survival program. Our report is meant to be constructive criticism, not an excuse for cutting these critical programs."

Bread for the World and RESULTS are non-profit organizations with the purpose of ending hunger and poverty through educational research, resources and campaigns.

-30-

-- By Shannon Harton

CORRECTIONS:

In the Feb. 22 story, "Committee approves massive overhaul of Southern Baptist Convention agencies," please change the vote count in the 8th paragraph to 64-3.

In the Feb. 27 story "Pastor fired after confronting HMB president...", please change the spelling of Fotenot to Fontenot.

END
