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**Book disputes SBC stance  
on women in the church**

By Ken Walker

ORLANDO, Fla. (ABP) -- The day Texas Baptists voted to curtail more than \$5 million in funding for Southern Baptist agencies, Lee Grady released a book advocating the empowerment of women in ministry.

While the two events weren't related, a new prohibition against women in the pulpit helped spark the Texas controversy. Grady -- who grew up in the Southern Baptist Convention and whose parents are still Southern Baptists -- hopes the convention will rethink its stance against female pastors.

Releasing women to follow the Holy Spirit is not a liberal vs. conservative issue, but one of faithfulness to biblical teaching, claims the author of "Ten Lies the Church Tells Women."

"I want it to create a forum for discussion," he said of the book, published by Creation House. "I want people to talk about it instead of sweeping it under the rug. I hope men and women read it and go to their pastor, recommend he read it, and say, 'We need to discuss this issue.'"

"I won't be satisfied until there's reformation ... a recovery of the issue of justification by faith and being able to go to God without a mediator. The church [in Martin Luther's time] didn't believe women were on the same level. Even though we're in the 21st century and say women have been liberated, in the church they're not."

The editor of the charismatic-oriented magazine, Charisma, Grady argues that most traditionalists refuse to recognize the contribution of ancient female leaders like Deborah and the prophetess Huldah in the Old Testament.

Nor will they acknowledge that women like Priscilla and Phoebe were New Testament church leaders, he says.

The same goes for the SBC's heritage. He asks where the convention would be without women like the legendary Lottie Moon, or Bertha Smith, whose 1940s work in China planted the seeds of revival.

Likewise, contemporary teachers like Beth Moore and Kay Arthur represent valuable voices needed to lead a modern-day revival, he says.

"I hope seminarians and thinkers within the SBC will explore issues and claims that are in my book," said Grady, who was recently ordained by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. "I want women catapulted into leadership in the SBC who are Spirit-led. If it's someone like Beth Moore, that's wonderful. I think she's a prophetess to the nation."

Among the "lies" that Grady says many churches tell women are that God created them as inferior beings; that women must not teach men in a church setting; and that strong female leaders are dangerous.

His book spells out a case against male domination in three primary areas:

-- The silencing of women in church, based on 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

The heart of that passage, verses 34-35, includes this prohibition. But Grady argues in these two verses that Paul was actually quoting from a letter by some anti-female church leaders.

He says that a Greek symbol at the beginning of verse 36 signals that the preceding statement was quoted. That explains why those two verses seemingly contradict everything Paul said previously about all believers participating in the New Testament church, he writes.

"To paraphrase the gospel, he is saying, 'What! You are going to silence women when the gospel of Jesus was first preached by women after they saw him at the tomb on Easter morning? Do you really think the gospel is only for men?'"

-- That women will be saved through bearing children, one interpretation of 2 Timothy 2:13-15.

While scholars disagree on the difficult passage, Grady said some believe the Greek text points to the coming of the Messiah through the Virgin Mary. He suggests the verse on childbearing could be translated, "But women will be saved through the bearing of the Child (Jesus)."

In other words, though women came under a curse in the Garden of Eden, Christ came to reverse the curse and bring women into a place of transformation, he says.

-- The belief that women should obediently submit to their husbands.

While this appears in Ephesians 5:22, and was cited in the SBC's 1998 revision of the "Baptist Faith and Message," the author argues that making a man the boss in marriage misconstrues Christ's teaching.

Jesus taught that a true leader in God's kingdom is a servant, he says. So if a man is called to lead a family, his leadership must be Christlike -- leading from a position of meekness, not prideful superiority or tyrannical domination.

The Greek word for submission is in a tense that refers to a self-imposed stance, Grady says. Thus, his book states that true submission is a choice, never something one person demands or imposes on another.

"We want to impose our cultural views on the Bible instead of reading it through the lens of the culture it was written in," he said in an interview with Associated Baptist Press. "In the first century women were viewed as chattel, property like cows and goats.

"For Paul to say, 'Husbands love your wives as your own body' was a revolutionary concept. The whole thing of Ephesians 5 is (they) are equal."

While mainline denominations have promoted women in leadership, Grady said it is no better for a woman to advocate liberal or non-Scriptural ideas than for a man. He emphasized that he is not calling for a spiritual type of affirmative action.

He pointed out there are many conservative theological groups that ordain women but don't support homosexual ordination or abortion. Grady said evangelicals must learn to separate such issues instead of lumping them into one category.

"I'm not taking sides with theological liberals in the SBC," he said. "Probably both sides will dismiss my views because of my charismatic views. But this isn't a matter of agreeing with conservatives or liberals, it's a matter of agreeing with the Word of God.

"Women in ministry is a biblical issue. If you read Acts, you see women were supported in the early church. I want to see the SBC acknowledge women are vessels of the Holy Spirit and can do all that God calls them to do."

## **Former SBC leader reflects on current issues**

By ABP staff

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Ninety-year-old James Sullivan, an elder statesman in the Southern Baptist Convention, says he is grieved by controversy in the nation's largest Protestant denomination but has purposely avoided taking sides.

In recent years, the former SBC president and agency head who wrote Baptist classics including "Rope of Sand with Strength of Steel" and "Baptist Polity As I See It," has attended annual meetings of the convention but has not registered as a messenger in order to sidestep divisive issues.

Still, in an interview with the Tennessee newspaper Baptist and Reflector, Sullivan shared some distinct views on topics that are in major focus in Southern Baptist life today.

-- On being conservative: "I have always said Baptists are 98 percent conservative," Sullivan said. The problem, he added, is that the definition of "conservative" has changed.

Being conservative once meant belief in the atonement, salvation by grace, eternal security and heavenly reward, he said. Today, however, there is a concept that all Baptists ought to believe everything alike, he noted.

"We forget there is diversity in every individual church," he said. "You can't have a unified concept with 41,000-plus churches when you can't have unity in one church."

-- Statements of faith: "One problem we face today is many people misunderstand that a statement of faith becomes a creed when it becomes mandatory," Sullivan said. He said there is nothing wrong with a statement of faith, because it tells where a group stands, as long as there is not enforced implementation on individuals and churches.

"When you make the creed the standard, you replace the Bible," he said.

-- The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget that supports both the various state conventions and the SBC: "I think it is the greatest system of denominational financing ever developed by any denomination, Protestant or Catholic," he said.

Though illness has weakened him in recent years, Sullivan said his mind is still sharp. "I don't preach as much as I would like or used to, but I keep up with everything," he said.

Asked if he had his life to live over again, would he still be a Southern Baptist, Sullivan responded emphatically: "No question. We still have the best system [of any denomination]. We're responsible for our decisions to God."

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-- Adapted from a Baptist and Reflector story by Lonnie Wilkey

## **News briefs from Associated Baptist Press**

### **Association ousts church over baptism policy**

ANDERSON, S.C. (ABP) -- A Baptist association in South Carolina has withdrawn fellowship from a church that does not require members to be baptized by immersion.

Saluda Baptist Association voted Oct. 19 to dismiss Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson over the congregation's new policy of accepting members who have been baptized by a mode other than immersion. The new policy requires a statement of Christian experience and a "meaningful baptism" but recognizes "the diversity of baptismal practices among Christian churches."

Leaders of the association said the policy could be interpreted as recognizing infant baptism, which Baptists reject. "The issue really is believer's baptism, not just baptism by immersion," credentials committee chairman Tony Howell said in a story in the South Carolina newspaper Baptist Courier.

### **Alliance of Baptists to consider name change**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Directors of the Alliance of Baptists voted in September to recommend a name change at the group's convocation next spring.

The new name, Alliance of Baptists in the U.S.A., would reduce confusion overseas, where the group is sometimes mistaken for the Baptist World Alliance, and better communicate that it is a national, and not a regional organization, according the Alliance's November newsletter.

It would mark the second name change for the group that formed as the Southern Baptist Alliance in 1986. Started as a moderate/progressive protest arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, it changed its name in 1992 to the Alliance of Baptists to signal that many members no longer considered themselves Southern Baptists.

### **Polyani Center director dismissed after comments**

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University officials fired the director of a controversial center for the study of "intelligent design" just days after a peer-review committee affirmed the work of the Michael Polyani Center at the school in Waco, Texas.

The Oct. 19 dismissal apparently stemmed from an e-mail written by center director William Dembski the day after a committee upheld the center's mission of fostering dialogue between disciplines of science of religion.

"Dogmatic opponents of design who demanded the center be shut down have met their Waterloo," Dembski wrote of critics who describe intelligent-design theories of creation as "creation science" or "pseudo science."

Baylor officials issued a statement citing a committee recommendation that individuals associated with the center "work in a collegial manner with other members of the Baylor faculty."

"Dr. Dembski's actions after the release of the report compromised his ability to serve as director," said Michael Beaty, director of Baylor's Institute of Faith and Learning, which houses the center.

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### **Adjunct missions professor 'mother' to hundreds of kids**

By Irma Duke

BUIES CREEK, N.C. (ABP) -- Carolyn McClendon doesn't have any children of her own, but she has "mothered" hundreds of little ones over the years. Most recently, she has been nurturing newborns being put up for adoption.

McClendon cares for the infants during a 21-day transitional period ,when if a biological mother has second thoughts she can change her mind and raise the baby herself.

"I don't know what they will experience in later years, but I do know for the first 21 days they are loved," McClendon said of the children. Those first days are very important, she said, and "I can help them start out right."

That means the around-the-clock feedings, diaper changes and other intensive care that newborns require.

As part of her ministry to the little ones and their new families, McClendon writes letters to adoptive parents describing what she has learned about the newborn and how she has cared for their child. She even gives them undeveloped film so that they won't have any gaps in their photo albums. Of course, she keeps one roll for herself, because she does become attached to "her" infants.

McClendon admits that "letting go of my babies" is difficult. She said that she has to keep reminding herself that her maternal care is a temporary assignment. Recently, she literally received one of her babies, Ethan, from his biological mother, told him goodbye and handed him over to his new parents. She listened as the biological mother said, "I love you enough to know this is the best I can possibly do for you."

McClendon, an adjunct missions professor at Campbell University Divinity School in Buies Creek, N.C., has given her life to children of all ages. Her full-time job is faith-ministries coordinator for the Alliance of AIDS Services-Carolina.

In this AIDS ministry based in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., she works with all ages, trying to provide and train care teams to help individuals and families affected by and infected with the HIV virus that causes AIDS. Many are children.

For more than 15 years, she was on the staff of Friendship Community Center in downtown New Orleans, where she provided after-school programs and summer day camps. As a missionary with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), she created and administered programming for as many as 400 children per week. "I reared half the children of New Orleans," she said jokingly.

Her laughter soon turned to tears, however, as the native of Mt. Hermon, La., recalled what happened when she left New Orleans. After superiors closed the community center in 1994, many of the inner-city children she had known returned to the streets.

"The day I moved, two of my kids were buried," she said. Two weeks later, when she had to return to New Orleans for an appointment, another was buried. "These were good kids," she said.

"If Friendship House hadn't closed, Johnny wouldn't be dead," one of the other students told McClendon. The ministry center had been home for thousands of kids in its almost 50-year-history. "Knowing that the next generation doesn't have a Friendship House is tough," she said.

In contrast to the pain she has experienced, McClendon shared how thankful she is to be a part of Campbell University Divinity School. "It is such a healing place," she explained. "You can be who you are. You don't have to agree with everything, but you know you are among people who care about you as a person." She sees her teaching at the divinity school as a part of her life-long ministry to children as she prepares others to reach out to them.

"Children are God's hope for the future. We have a responsibility to do what we can for the present and in the future."

The Campbell Divinity School, which opened in 1996 with 25 students, currently has 157 students enrolled. The school offers the master-of-divinity and master-of-arts-in-Christian-education degrees and recently achieved the first step in the process of accreditation by The Association of Theological Schools.

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