



# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

October 25, 2001

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Nashville, Tennessee

(01-90)

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Southern Baptists, Catholics discuss salvation in meeting
- News briefs from Associated Baptist Press

NOV 01 2001

### **Southern Baptists, Catholics discuss salvation in meeting**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic scholars sat down recently to discuss how the two faith groups view the nature and means of salvation.

The understanding of how people are saved from their sins and attain eternal life is one of the most visible differences between Baptists and Catholics. Catholics teach that baptism and communion are "sacraments," meaning that they actually impart grace or earn merit toward salvation. Baptists believe salvation comes solely by faith in Christ. They describe baptism and the Lord's Supper as "ordinances" to be observed as outward signs of a spiritual change that occurs all at once when a person accepts Christ as Lord and Savior.

According to a press release from the National Council of Catholic Bishops Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, there was no attempt to reach common agreement or even to present a formal report.

"But the hope was expressed that the encounter will provide a service to Baptists and Catholics, who live and work together, marry one another and provide common Christian witness in communities across the country," according to the report of the Sept. 6-8 meeting held at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Official conversations between Baptists and Catholics have been held annually since 1994. Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board, however, said last spring that the talks would end in 2002 because they do not advance the agency's missions priorities.

In recent years, a small but vocal group of Baptists grew suspicious of the ongoing talks, fearing they glossed over important theological differences and hindered efforts of Baptists to proselytize Catholics.

A leading critic, Pastor Jerry Moser of Bayou DuLarge Baptist Church in Theriot, La., objects particularly to references in public documents describing Baptists and Catholics as fellow Christians. He terms the Catholic doctrine of salvation by works "another gospel" from what is taught in the Bible.

He also says Catholic participants are using the conversations in their own agenda of advancing "full visible unity" among all Christian denominations.

"Over the past few years, each time the SBC/RCC conversation has met, it has been followed with a statement posted by RCC leaders," Moser wrote in an e-mail newsletter he produces. "Consistently, these statements have advanced the false impression that Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics recognize each other as Christian communities, and as such are gradually moving toward reconciliation. Typically, SBC participants have allowed this public misinformation to go unchallenged in the public arena. Thus,

incrementally, many Southern Baptists have been influenced into accepting something that contradicts the gospel we profess to believe."

In the newsletter, Moser says the talks should end immediately. "If NAMB executives believe they have already reached the end of what this official 'conversation' can produce, then why continue this dialogue at all? Why spend more Cooperative Program funds on something that NAMB believes will not produce anything of benefit? We Southern Baptists have already published what we believe, and Roman Catholic officials have published what they believe. These publications have been officially approved by each body. No amount of private 'conversation' with individuals will change these published beliefs. So, what's the point of being involved in any more meetings?" he wrote.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

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

### **Ministers charged in bank robbery**

FAYETTE, Miss. -- A Baptist pastor in Vidalia, La., has been arrested on charges of robbing a bank in Fayette, Miss., Oct. 3.

Barney Rankin, 44, pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church in Vidalia, is believed to have driven the getaway car, a 2000 Yukon registered to his church.

"It's not the first pastor I've arrested, but it's the first pastor I've arrested for bank robbery," Jefferson County Sheriff Peter Walker told the Natchez Democrat.

Another man identified by the paper as a former Natchez minister turned himself in to authorities in Atlanta Oct. 5. Jimmy E. Hargrave, 39, is believed to have entered United Mississippi Bank and fired one shot into the ceiling before leaving with an undisclosed amount of money.

The newspaper quoted members of Rankin's church as being astonished by their pastor's arrest and worried that the episode would hurt the congregation's reputation. (ABP)

### **Soulforce plans SBC protests**

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif. -- Soulforce, an interfaith gay-rights organization, has said it plans to demonstrate at the Southern Baptist Convention for the third straight year.

The organization, which protested at SBC meetings in Orlando and New Orleans, plans to be on the front lines again when the SBC meets next summer in St. Louis, according to a press release. The organization claims that the denomination's teachings against homosexuality encourage violence against gays. SBC president James Merritt has declined to enter dialogue with the group, saying he believes homosexuality is a "sinful lifestyle."

"The Southern Baptist Convention continues to wreak havoc on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals and their families both inside and outside the church," said Mel White, executive director and co-founder of Soulforce. "Soulforce will continue its relentless campaign to challenge the untruths perpetuated by Southern Baptist religious policies and teachings against God's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children." (ABP)

## **Seminary president criticizes Georgia policy**

KANSAS CITY, Kan. -- The president of an American Baptist seminary criticized Georgia Baptist Convention leaders for cracking down on a women-in-ministry chapter planning to meet at a state convention retreat facility.

Georgia Baptist Women in Ministry decided to move their Oct. 26-27 meeting after GBC Executive Director Robert White said the meeting would be monitored for any "untoward" content and shut down if deemed necessary.

White said leaders would not tolerate any promotion of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and were concerned that theology professor Molly Marshall, the subject of past controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, was speaking to the group.

Central Baptist Theological Seminary President Tom Clifton issued a statement Oct. 24 calling the action by Georgia Baptists "misguided." Clifton declared full support for both the Atlanta-based CBF, which provides partial funding for the school in Kansas City, Kan., and for Marshall, a full professor at Central Seminary. (ABP)

## **Kentucky committee recognizes 'value' of faith confessions**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- Kentucky Baptists will consider at their annual meeting this fall a recommendation acknowledging "value" of all the historic Baptist confessions of faith, including the most recent version of the "Baptist Faith and Message."

The recommendation follows a study authorized last year to determine ways for the Kentucky Baptist Convention to "best relate to" the "Baptist Faith and Message" as revised by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Some of the changes are controversial. Conservatives say they were necessary to close loopholes that allowed liberals to take over SBC agencies in the 1960s and 1970s. Moderates, however, say the new document is too narrow and is meant to exclude non-fundamentalists from convention leadership.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention "Baptist Faith and Message" study committee affirms "the Bible as the basis of all our faith and practice," while encouraging churches to use confessions of faith "as resources to inform and edify Kentucky Baptists concerning the basic tenets of our faith."

The recommendation specifically endorses the 1742 "Philadelphia Confession of Faith," the "New Hampshire Confession of Faith" of 1833 and the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted in 1925 with revisions in 1963, 1998 and 2000. (ABP)

## **American Baptist group joins disaster-relief effort**

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. -- Disaster-relief volunteers from American Baptist Men were dispatched Oct. 22 to help with cleanup on lower Manhattan near the site of Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Up to six crews of six volunteers each will help tenants clean dust and ash from apartments near the World Trade Centers collapse. The effort is expected to last four weeks.

"This situation exceeds anything the U.S. disaster-relief community has ever dealt with," said Allen Abbott, director of AB Men's Ministries. "In scale and scope, this will be an immense and long-term operation."

ABMen, a division of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., became involved in disaster relief more recently than the much larger Southern Baptist Convention and on a smaller scale. Several disaster-relief units operated by Southern Baptist state conventions have previously responded to disaster sites in New York and Washington. (ABP)

## **Professor sees Christian symbols in Harry Potter**

WACO, Texas -- While many Christian parents are concerned about elements of witchcraft and wizardry in the "Harry Potter" book series, a Baylor University professor said they are also rich with Christian themes.

"J.K. Rowling understands the diverse world of Christian symbols, relying for instance on images of the phoenix and unicorn in early books," said Scott Moore, a Baylor philosophy professor. In the medieval church, both were used as symbols for Christ.

Moore said Harry and his friends also are schooled in classical Christian virtues, such as the value of always speaking the truth. (ABP)

### **North Carolina presidential candidate withdraws due to illness**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- A conservative pastor who had announced he was running for president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has withdrawn from the race for health reasons.

Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charlotte, whose cancer of the bone marrow had been in remission since 1997, said the disease has returned "with a flourish."

Page told the Biblical Recorder newspaper he hopes the convention "can move toward loving each other and caring for each other and just doing what's best for the kingdom's work." He said he welcomed any prayers on his behalf. (ABP)

### **Jimmy Allen receives inaugural award from Baptists Today**

ATLANTA -- The independent news journal Baptists Today presented its first Judson-Rice Award for leadership and integrity to former Southern Baptist Convention leader Jimmy Allen.

Allen, who served both as president of the SBC and administrator of its Radio and Television Commission before retiring, now is minister at an interdenominational chapel in Big Canoe, Ga.

The new award, named for early Baptist denominational leaders Adoniram and Ann Judson and Luther Rice, honors individuals who provide "great influence as a Baptist leader while consistently demonstrating the highest Christian integrity." (ABP)

### **Northern Virginia seminary installs president**

FALLS CHURCH, Va. -- The John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Falls Church, Va., inaugurated its first permanent president Sept. 23.

Randel Everett resigned as pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church to accept the post in March. The Leland Center, established in 1998.

"I am thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to serve in the John Leland Center," the new president commented. Referring to Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Everett continued, "The tool we have to overcome evil is the gospel. We have good news to give to the world." (ABP)

-30-

-- By ABP staff

**END**

---