

Report of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee

June 16, 1987

Report of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee

by SBC in St. Louis, Missouri

June 16, 1987

Introduction: During the 1985 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, June 11-13, 1985, a special committee was created to attempt to determine the sources of the current controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention and to make findings and recommendations to resolve it. The motion, overwhelmingly adopted, says:

"With gratitude for God's bountiful blessings on us as Southern Baptists and with recognition of our unparalleled opportunity to confront every person on earth with the Gospel of Christ by the year 2000 and with acknowledgment of divisions among us, which if allowed to continue, inevitably will impede our progress, impair our fellowship and imperil our future, and after much prayer, we offer the following motion:

That a Special Committee be authorized by this Convention, in session, in Dallas, June, 1985; and

That this Committee seek to determine the sources of the controversies in our Convention, and make findings and recommendations regarding these controversies, so that Southern Baptists might effect reconciliation and effectively discharge their responsibilities to God by cooperating together to accomplish evangelism, missions, Christian education and other causes authorized by our Constitution, all to the Glory of God. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35) (John 17:21); and

That this Committee follow the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement in regard to theological issues, and operate within the Constitution and Bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention; and

That to accomplish its work, this Committee shall recognize the role of trustees and shall work with and through appropriate Boards, Commissions and Agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. This Committee shall report on the progress of its work to each meeting of the Executive Committee. The Trustees, Boards, and Agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, and their officers and employees, shall fully cooperate with the Committee to accomplish the purposes outlined in this motion; and

That staffing and professional advice for this Committee shall be in accord with the Business and Financial Plan of the Southern Baptist Convention. Funding shall come from Cooperative Program funds received by the Executive Committee as a priority item before the percentage division and allocation of the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program Allocation Budget; and

That the Committee may conduct its business in open sessions, and may hold public hearings, but, the Committee may also hold executive sessions to accomplish its work; and

That any vacancy, or vacancies, on the Special Committee be filled by the Executive Committee at its next meeting after such vacancy occurs. In the filling of any such vacancy, balance of representation shall be maintained; and

That the Committee may make its final report and recommendation to the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention and request that it be discharged, or the Committee may make a preliminary report to the 1986 Convention and may recommend that the Special Committee be continued in existence for an additional year, in which instance, the Committee shall make its final report and recommendations to the 1987 Southern Baptist Convention; and

That all Southern Baptists be urged to exercise restraint, to refrain from divisive action and comments, and to reflect Christian love, while this Committee is doing its work; and

That the following persons be designated to serve on the Special Committee:

Charles G. Fuller, Chairman	Charles W. Pickering
Harmon M. Born	William E. Poe
Doyle E. Carlton, Jr.	Ray E. Roberts
Mrs. Morris H. Chapman	Adrian P. Rogers
*William O. Crews	*Cecil E. Sherman
Robert E. Cuttino	John Sullivan
Mrs. A. Harrison Gregory	Daniel G. Vestal
Jim Henry	Jerry Vines
William E. Hull	Edwin H. Young
Herschel H. Hobbs	*Charles F. Stanley
Albert McClellan	*W. Winfred Moore

*NOTE: William O. Crews was elected president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary October 13, 1986, but was asked to remain as a member; Cecil E. Sherman resigned from the Special Committee Oct. 22, 1986, and was replaced by Peter James Flamming; Charles F. Stanley and W. Winfred Moore served by virtue of office as president and first vice president of the Convention, and were asked to remain after their terms of office expired.

Since its creation, the Peace Committee has met 14 times. Following each meeting, a report was given to Southern Baptists by Chairman Charles G. Fuller through the denominational news service, Baptist Press.

In keeping with its assignment, the Peace Committee has determined what it believes to be the primary sources of the controversy, has made findings in reference to those sources and, in this report, is making recommendations as to possible ways to effect reconciliation.

I. Sources of the Controversy

During its first meeting, the Peace Committee determined the primary source of the controversy is theological differences, but found there are political causes as well.

Theological sources: In meeting after meeting of the Peace Committee, talk turned to the nature of inspiration of the Scriptures, often to the point of preempting the committee's established agenda. Gradually, it became clear that while there might be other theological differences, the authority of the Word of God is the focus of differences. The primary source of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is the Bible; more specifically, the ways in which the Bible is viewed.

All Baptists see the Bible as authoritative; the question is the extent and nature of its authority. The differences in recent years have developed around the phrase in Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963, that the Bible "has...truth without any mixture of error for its matter..."

The action which created the Peace Committee instructed it to follow the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 in regard to theological issues. Although the statement includes a Preamble and seventeen articles, the committee has focused primarily on Article One, "The Scriptures:"

"The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ."

Dr. Herschel Hobbs, a member of the Peace Committee and chairman of the committee which wrote the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement, explained the phrase "truth without any mixture of error for its matter..." by reference to II Timothy 3:16 which says, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." He explained: "The Greek New Testament reads 'all'--without the definite article--and that means every single part of the whole is God-breathed. And a God of truth does not breathe error." Dr. Hobbs made the comments during the 1981 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles, California.

Using Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 as a yardstick, Peace Committee subcommittees visited each of the Southern Baptist seminaries and five other agencies: the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, Baptist Sunday School Board, Historical Commission and Christian Life Commission. Following those visits, the committee adopted a "Statement on Theological Diversity."

"The Peace Committee has completed a preliminary investigation of the theological situation in our SBC seminaries. We have found significant theological diversity within

our seminaries, reflective of the diversity within our wider constituency. These divergencies are found among those who claim to hold a high view of Scripture and to teach in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963.

Examples of this diversity include the following, which are intended to be illustrative but not exhaustive.

(1) Some accept and affirm the direct creation and historicity of Adam and Eve while others view them instead as representative of the human race in its creation and fall.

(2) Some understand the historicity of every event in Scripture as reported by the original source while others hold that the historicity can be clarified and revised by the findings of modern historical scholarship.

(3) Some hold to the stated authorship of every book in the Bible while others hold that in some cases such attribution may not refer to the final author or may be pseudonymous.

(4) Some hold that every miracle in the Bible is intended to be taken as an historical event while others hold that some miracles are intended to be taken as parabolic.

The Peace Committee is working earnestly to find ways to build bridges between those holding divergent views so that we may all legitimately coexist and work together in harmony to accomplish our common mission. Please pray that we may find ways to use our diversity to win the greatest number to faith in Christ as Savior and Lord."

Early in its second year, the Peace Committee continued to discuss theological concerns, including the fact that there are at least two separate and distinct interpretations of Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963, reflective of the diversity present in the Convention. One view holds that when the article says the Bible has "truth without any mixture of error for its matter," it means *all* areas--historical, scientific, theological and philosophical. The other holds the "truth" relates only to matters of faith and practice.

The Committee discussed whether the faculties of the SBC seminaries adequately reflect the views of many Southern Baptists who believe in the first interpretation. A Peace Committee subcommittee met with the six seminary presidents to communicate the need for the faculties to reflect the beliefs of these Southern Baptists.

In October, 1986, the Peace Committee held a prayer retreat at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center near Santa Fe, New Mexico, attended by the Peace Committee and leaders of all national agencies. During that meeting, the seminary presidents presented a statement of their intentions which has become known as the "Glorieta Statement:"

"We, the presidents of the six SBC seminaries, through prayerful and careful reflection and dialogue, have unanimously agreed to declare these commitments regarding our lives and our work with Southern Baptists.

We believe that Christianity is supernatural in its origin and history. We repudiate every theory of religion which denies the supernatural elements in our faith. The miracles of the Old and New Testaments are historical evidences of God's judgment, love and redemption.

We believe that the Bible is fully inspired; it is 'God-breathed' (II Tim. 3:16), utterly unique. No other book or collection of books can justify that claim. The sixty-six books of the Bible are not errant in any area of reality. We hold to their infallible power and binding authority.

We believe that our six seminaries are fulfilling the purposes assigned to them by the Southern Baptist Convention. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that they are not perfect institutions. We recognize that there are legitimate concerns regarding them which we are addressing.

We commit ourselves therefore to the resolution of the problems which beset our beloved denomination. We are ready and eager to be partners in the peace process. Specifically:

(1) We reaffirm our seminary confessional statements, and we will enforce compliance by the persons signing them.

(2) We will foster in our classrooms a balanced, scholarly frame of reference for presenting fairly the entire spectrum of scriptural interpretations represented by our constituencies. We perceive this to be both good education and good cooperation.

(3) We respect the convictions of all Southern Baptists and we repudiate the caricature and intimidation of persons for their theological beliefs.

(4) We commit ourselves to fairness in selecting faculty, lecturers and chapel speakers across the theological spectrum of our Baptist constituency.

(5) We will lead our seminary communities in spiritual revival, personal discipleship, Christian lifestyle and active churchmanship.

(6) We will deepen and strengthen the spirit of evangelism and missions on our campuses while emphasizing afresh the distinctive doctrines of our Baptist heritage.

(7) We have scheduled for Southern Baptists three national conferences.

A Conference on Biblical Inerrancy--*1987

A Conference on Biblical Interpretation--1988

A Conference on Biblical Imperative--1989

*NOTE: The first conference, focusing on biblical inerrancy, was held at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center May 4-7, 1987, with more than 1,000 in attendance.

We share these commitments with the hope that all Southern Baptists will join us in seeking "the wisdom from above" in our efforts toward reconciliation:

"The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity." (James 3:17)

The Peace Committee affirmed the Glorieta Statement and ceased its official inquiry, referring unanswered questions and unresolved issues back to the administrators and trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, hoping the results of their actions would be satisfactory to the Convention-at-large.

During the Committee's December, 1986, meeting, additional questions arose as to the meaning and the implementation of the Glorieta Statement.

The seminary presidents report that their efforts to implement the Statement have included an effort to recruit conservative scholars to fill faculty vacancies, expansion of reading lists, invitations to conservative scholars to address chapel and other events, a commitment to treat all persons fairly and expanded evangelistic and missions activities on campus.

The question for the majority of the Peace Committee, however, remains not whether there is diversity in the Southern Baptist Convention but how broad that diversity can be while still continuing to cooperate.

Political sources: In the opinion of the Peace Committee, the controversy of the last decade began as a theological concern. When people of good intention became frustrated because they felt their convictions on Scripture were not seriously dealt with, they organized politically to make themselves heard. Soon, another group formed to counter the first and the political process intensified.

The Peace Committee, primarily through its Political Activities Subcommittee, has studied charges and counter charges regarding political activity. It has looked at many issues, including:

Restructuring the Constitution and Bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention to limit the appointive powers of the president; restructuring the way in which the annual meeting is held, specifically shifting the pre-Convention meetings to post-Convention meetings; cooperation between the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum; discussing the coverage of personalities and issues in the controversy by the official and unofficial news media outlets; the use of descriptive terms and labels for the various groups, "de-politicizing" the Convention by asking the various groups to "standdown" from political activities; instituting stricter means of messenger registration and voting to prevent misuse of the registration and voting processes at annual meetings.

A primary area of discussion was changing the Constitution and Bylaws of the Convention to restrict the appointive powers of the president. However, the majority of the committee's members feel the basic Convention structure has served Southern Baptists well and should not now be changed.

The Committee investigated numerous charges of political malfeasance and voter irregularity. It heard a detailed report, complete with statistical analysis, on messenger participation at annual meetings, presented by the SBC Registration Secretary and Convention Manager, as well as the chairman of a special study committee appointed by the SBC Executive Committee. Although the reports included isolated instances of registration and ballot abuse, there was no evidence of widespread or organized misuse of the ballot by any political group and no evidence of massive voter irregularities related to annual meetings.

The Political Activities Subcommittee, as well as a special ad-hoc committee, dealt with the question of a parliamentarian for the annual meeting. The matter was deferred in 1986, because then SBC president Charles F. Stanley appointed a certified parliamentarian to assist him at the Atlanta annual meeting. The Committee is recommending a new bylaw be prepared concerning the appointment of a certified parliamentarian and two assistant parliamentarians for the annual meeting.

A special subcommittee also looked into the possibility of "negative designation" or "selective support" of agencies through the Cooperative Program, but concluded that a change in the basic structure of the unified giving plan would not provide significant help in resolving the crisis.

Some of the issues have been brought forward as recommendations from the Peace Committee. Others were not deemed sufficiently significant to warrant recommendations at this time.

II. Findings

The Peace Committee has made findings on Scripture and on politics.

On Theology: The Committee found there is significant diversity in the understanding of Article I "On Scripture" of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963. The Committee found there are at least two separate and distinct interpretations of the article. One holding "truth without any mixture of error for its matter," means *all* areas--historical, scientific, theological and philosophical. The other holds "truth" relates only to matters of faith and practice.

The Committee, discussing whether the faculties of the SBC seminaries adequately reflect the views of many Southern Baptists who believe in the first interpretation, found there was not a theological balance represented in the faculties at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary or Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Committee adopted two statements concerning its findings on theology, one a "foundational" statement, and the other a more elaborate statement.

The "Foundational Statement On Theology:"

The Committee agreed the following Scripture references should be read as an introduction to the "Foundational Statement on Theology:" Deuteronomy 4:2; Joshua 1:7; Psalm 119:160; Matthew 5:18; II Timothy 3:16; Revelation 22:10.

"It is the conclusion of the majority of the Peace Committee that the cause of peace within the Southern Baptist Convention will be greatly enhanced by the affirmation of the whole Bible as being 'not errant in any area of reality.'

"Therefore, we exhort the trustees and administrators of our seminaries and other agencies affiliated with or supported by the Southern Baptist Convention to faithfully discharge their responsibility to carefully preserve the doctrinal integrity of our institutions receiving our support, and only employ professional staff who believe in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and that the Bible is 'truth without any mixture of error.' "

The Committee also adopted the more elaborate statement on Scripture.

The "Statement On Scripture:"

We, as a Peace Committee, affirm Biblical authority for all of life and for all fields of knowledge. The Bible is a book of redemption, not a book of science, psychology, sociology or economics. But, where the Bible speaks, the Bible speaks truth in all realms of reality and to all fields of knowledge. The Bible, when properly interpreted, is authoritative to all of life.

We, as a Peace Committee, reaffirm the Baptist commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture, and to the historic Baptist position that the Bible has 'truth without any mixture of error for its matter.' We affirm that the narratives of Scripture are historically and factually accurate. We affirm that the historic accounts of the miraculous and the supernatural are truthful as given by God and recorded by the biblical writers.

We, as a Peace Committee, have found that most Southern Baptists see 'truth without any mixture of error for its matter,' as meaning, for example, that

(1) They believe in direct creation of mankind and therefore they believe Adam and Eve were real persons.

(2) They believe the named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them by those books.

(3) They believe the miracles described in Scripture did indeed occur as supernatural events in history.

(4) They believe that the historical narratives given by biblical authors are indeed accurate and reliable as given by those authors.

We call upon Southern Baptist institutions to recognize the great number of Southern Baptists who believe this interpretation of our confessional statement and, in the future, to build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large.

However, some members of the Peace Committee differ from this viewpoint. They would hold that "truth without any mixture of error" relates only to faith and practice. They would also prefer a broader theological perspective. Yet, we have learned to live together on the Peace Committee in mutual charity and commitment to each other. We pledge our mutual efforts to fulfill the Great Commission and we call on others within our Convention to make the same pledge.

On Politics: The Committee has found that the sources of the political aspect of the controversy are long standing. Historically, informal political groups or coalitions have emerged in Southern Baptist life. Prior to the last decade, most of these groups operated informally by word-of-mouth among mutual acquaintances interested in selecting the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention. More recently, these groups have developed organized coalitions centered around theological perceptions and committed to electing leadership committed to a particular viewpoint. The effort has been largely successful but led to the formation of a counter-effort which has increased hostility and turned up the heat on the controversy.

After its investigation, the Peace Committee found "that the extent of political activity...at the present time creates distrust, diminishes our ability to do missions and evangelism, is detrimental to our influence and impedes our ability to serve our Lord."

The Committee adopted two statements, one a "foundational" statement and the other a more elaborate statement.

The "Foundational Statement On Politics:"

It is the unanimous conclusion of the Peace Committee that fairness in the appointive process will contribute to peace.

Therefore, we exhort the present and future presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Boards to select nominees who endorse the Baptist Faith and Message Statement and are drawn in balanced fashion from the broad spectrum of loyal, cooperative Southern Baptists, representative of the diversity of our denomination.

The more elaborate statement on politics also was adopted.

The "Statement On Politics:"

Politics are intrinsically a part of congregational policy, i.e., voting, public and private discussions, influencing others to share one's view.

Historically, informal political groups or coalitions have emerged in Southern Baptist life. Prior to the last decade, most of these groups operated informally by word-of-mouth among mutual acquaintances interested in selecting the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention. More recently, these groups have developed organized coalitions centered on theological perceptions and individual leaders committed to a defined viewpoint. These coalitions have adopted political strategies for electing officers of the Convention, appointing committees, and changing or preserving the character of accepted institutions. These strategies have included extensive travel, numerous informational and ideological meetings, mailouts, network of representatives who share in this common strategy, and sustained efforts to recruit messengers to attend the Convention.

We as a Peace Committee recognize that these political coalitions and strategies were born in part, at least, out of deep conviction and concern for theological issues.

But, we believe that the time has come for the Convention to move beyond this kind of politics. We find that the extent of political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention at the present time promotes a party spirit, creates discord, division and distrust, diminishes our ability to do missions and evangelism, is detrimental to our influence and impedes our ability to serve our Lord.

If allowed to continue unchecked, such political activity in the Convention can have disastrous consequences affecting our ability to serve our Lord and do His work.

Steps have been taken and additional steps are recommended in this report to resolve the theological issues involved in our present controversy. Because of our fear of the consequences of continued organized political activity within our Convention, and since steps have been and will continue to be taken to resolve theological issues, we feel that continued organized political activity within the Southern Baptist Convention is no longer necessary, desirable, or appropriate. We think the continuation of such political activity in the future would be unacceptable and could be disastrous.

We recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention request all organized political factions to discontinue the organized political activity in which they are now engaged. We think the following specific activities are out of place and request all groups to discontinue these specific political activities:

- (1) Organized political activity.
- (2) Political strategies developed by a group with central control.
- (3) Holding information/ideological meetings.
- (4) Extensive travel on behalf of political objectives within the Convention.
- (5) Extensive mail-outs to promote political objectives in the Convention.

In 1986, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted the report of the Peace Committee which found:

(1) Some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum have used intemperate, inflammatory and unguarded language, i.e., "going for the jugular," "Holy War," "independent fundamentalist," "flaming liberal," and other pejorative terms.

(2) Some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum and the autonomous independent journals on both sides of the issue have labeled and attributed improper motives to people with whom they disagree.

(3) Distribution of news is necessary in a democratic society. There have been instances when news releases have been altered, distorting the intent of the article and oftentimes creating confusion. In some denominational papers and in some autonomous independent journals, there has been prejudice against the conservative political activists and in some autonomous independent journals there has been prejudice against the moderate side.

The Convention in Atlanta adopted the recommendations of the Peace Committee as follows.

--That the Convention deplore the use of the type of intemperate, inflammatory and unguarded language used by some spokesmen on both sides of the political spectrum.

--That the Convention urge Baptist Press, the state Baptist papers and the autonomous independent journals to be especially careful to be fair and accurate in reporting events in the Convention and refrain from labeling and attributing improper motives.

Despite these recommendations approved by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Peace Committee finds that some of the state Baptist papers and the autonomous journals--The Southern Baptist Advocate, SBC Today, Baptists United News and The Baptist Laity Journal--have continued to use intemperate, inflammatory language and have labeled individuals and impugned motives.

We renew again our request to these papers and journals to contribute to the process of reconciliation and the promotion of our cooperative work together as we seek to do the work of Christ. We again call upon all state Baptist papers and the independent autonomous journals to comply with the action taken at the Atlanta Convention and outlined above. We call upon individual Southern Baptists to use their influence to help stop these divisive actions.

We, the Peace Committee, ask Baptist Press, all Baptist state papers, Baptist publications and independent autonomous journals to refrain from using terms and labels, specifically terms such as fundamentalist, liberal, fundamental-conservative and moderate-conservative.

III. Conclusions

The enabling resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention at the 1985 Dallas Convention commissioned this special committee to determine the sources of the controversies within the Convention and to make findings and recommendations that would make it possible for Southern Baptists to effect reconciliation and to continue to cooperate in carrying out evangelism, missions, Christian education, and other causes.

Making peace among all Southern Baptists was not to be the work of the Committee. *Reconciliation* was, and still is, the key word. Surely, there must be peace; that is, there must be an end to hostility among us, which is peace. Committed Christians must live in peace. No recommendation of the committee is needed to effect peace--it is found in the heart of the believer.

Reconciliation may be a first cousin to peace, but it rests on a different foundation. To reconcile is to harmonize, to cause to be friendly again, to reunite, to accept our differences and to cooperate in all undertakings which enhance our mutual interests and goals. It was only through a subtle process of reconciliation, taking place over 142 years of history, that Southern Baptists have with God's blessing, and His help, achieved a preeminent position in missions, education and evangelism. We have kept our differences from creating hostility, until recently, and not only have we lived in peace but with remarkable harmony and cooperation.

We must never try to impose upon individual Southern Baptists nor local congregations a specific view of how Scripture must be interpreted. If such an attempt is made then reconciliation is not the goal nor is it possible to achieve.

There is but one way for us to survive *intact* as a denomination. It involves the recognition of some basic facts, among which are these:

- (1) Changes are now taking place in the leadership of many Southern Baptist Convention boards.
- (2) These changes will impact these boards and agencies for years to come.
- (3) The role of many who have exercised leadership in the past will change as colleagues of different persuasions will fill leadership roles.
- (4) This change will mean that some who have been in general agreement with Convention programs in the past will have less involvement, while those who previously have had difficulty in agreeing with certain Convention programs will have more involvement.
- (5) We have seen changes in Southern Baptist life in the past and we will see changes in the future. The important issue is that we must continue to be faithful stewards of the opportunities God has given Southern Baptists.

How then can we survive intact or substantially that way?

First, the hostility must cease within the heart of each of us. That brings peace.

Second, our leaders must have and must demonstrate a view of Baptist life that reaches beyond the limits of their own personal theology. No effort should be made or should be permitted to be made which would seek to eliminate from Baptist life theological beliefs or practices which are consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message Statement and which have found traditional acceptance by substantial numbers of our people. Proponents of extreme positions at each end of the current Baptist theological spectrum should be encouraged to major on those things which lead to cooperative efforts and to minimize divisive issues and controversies.

Third, and most important, nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of genuine cooperation in missions, Christian education, evangelism and our other traditional causes. While different leaders may arise, the nature and work of our Christian cooperative enterprise must continue unabated.

Finally, we should recognize and freely admit that the greatest source of our strength as a denomination lies in the thousands of local church congregations that support our cooperative undertakings. Through long years of experience, they have learned to trust our leaders, our agencies and institutions and, because of that trust, they have provided magnificent support and responded to that leadership.

We have proclaimed this to be God's way of doing His work. Through continued cooperation in His enterprises, we can continue this mighty work. If we insist on having our way, drawing lines which exclude from places of leadership and responsibility those who do not hold our specific viewpoint, we can destroy what God has created in the Southern Baptist Convention. If, however, we can maintain a cooperative spirit and let our sense of Christian love bridge the gap of the diversity among us, we can continue to bear effective witness to His Kingdom enterprise throughout all the World.

IV. Recommendations

We make the following recommendations:

I. Although the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 is a statement of basic belief, it is not a creed. Baptists are non-creedal, in that they do not impose a man-made interpretation of Scripture on others. Baptists, however, declare their commitment to commonly held interpretations which then become parameters for cooperation. Therefore, we recommend that we:

1. Reaffirm the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement as the guideline by which all of the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention are to conduct their work.

2. Request, respectfully, all Southern Baptists to continue their high view of Scripture as given by the inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:16), and to diligently teach and proclaim the truthfulness, the reliability and the authority of the Bible.

II. Although all Southern Baptists do not understand the Baptist Faith and Message Statement on Scripture the same way, this diversity should not create hostility towards each other, stand in the way of genuine cooperation, or interfere with the rights and privileges of all Southern Baptists within the denomination to participate in its affairs.

Because fairness in the process of making committee and board appointments is essential to the process of reconciliation and peace, the Committee recommends that the present and all future presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Boards select nominees who endorse the Baptist Faith and Message Statement, and are drawn in balanced fashion from the broad spectrum of loyal, cooperative Southern Baptists, representative of the diversity of our denomination.

Recognizing the nature of our diversity and the rightful place of biblical interpretation, we believe we can learn from each other and in the long run, we can protect each other from unwanted extremes.

We, therefore, further recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention continue in every attempt to remain a unified fellowship, rejecting the notion of any official division of our body.

III. We recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee study and report to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1988, a Convention bylaw establishing an Office of Parliamentarian, and that the study include the following considerations:

1. The president and two vice-presidents, acting together, shall annually appoint a chief parliamentarian and two assistant parliamentarians to advise the presiding officer of the Convention on matters of parliamentary procedure.

2. The chief parliamentarian shall be a fully certified member of the American Institute of Parliamentarians who has the experience to serve effectively at annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

IV. In view of the fact that the Cooperative Program is the lifeline of all that we are doing as Southern Baptists, we commend our churches and state conventions for their increased giving to the Cooperative Program and we recommend to our people that they continue their strong support of the Cooperative Program.

We recognize the historic right of each Southern Baptist church to give to the work of the agencies, in keeping with its deeply held convictions, without intimidation or criticism.

We recommend that the Cooperative Program be continued unchanged.

V. We recommend that, in view of the intense public discussions of the last few years, the trustees determine the theological positions of the seminary administrators and faculty members in order to guide them in renewing their determination to stand by their commitment to the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963, to the Glorieta Statement of their intention to work toward reconciliation of the conflict in the Convention, and to their own institutional declarations of faith as the guidelines by which they will teach their students in preparation for Gospel ministry in the churches, mission fields and service to the denomination.

The Bible is a book of redemption, not a book of science, psychology, sociology or economics. But, where the Bible speaks, the Bible speaks truth in all realms of reality and to all fields of knowledge. The Bible, when properly interpreted, is authoritative to all of life.

We call upon Southern Baptist institutions to recognize the great number of Southern Baptists who believe this interpretation of Article I of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963, and, in the future, to build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large.

We, as a Peace Committee, recognize and respect those in Southern Baptist life whose view of Scripture differs from this one and pledge to continue to cooperate. We pledge the highest regard, charity and commitment to them in our combined efforts to fulfill the Great Commission and we call upon them to make the same pledge.

VI. We recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention request all organized political factions to discontinue the organized political activity in which they are now engaged. At this time, we think the following specific political activity is out of place and we request all groups to discontinue the following specific political activities:

- (1) Organized political activity.
- (2) Political strategies developed by a group with central control.
- (3) Holding information/ideological meetings.
- (4) Extensive travel on behalf of political objectives within the Convention.
- (5) Extensive mailouts to promote political objectives in the Convention.

VII. We recommend that Baptist Press, all state Baptist papers, independent autonomous journals and individual Southern Baptists to refrain from the use of intemperate and inflammatory language, labeling individuals and impugning motives.

Specifically, we request that all Baptist writers and individual Baptists refrain from characterizing fellow Southern Baptists in terms such as "fundamentalist," "liberal," "fundamental-conservative," "moderate-conservative."

We request all Southern Baptists to take a positive view of Southern Baptist life, to use their influence to help stop the above divisive actions and to contribute to the process of reconciliation and the promotion of our cooperative endeavors as we seek to do the work of Christ.

VIII. We recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention request the SBC Resolutions Committee to continue its policy of not presenting resolutions that are divisive in Southern Baptist life for at least the next three years.

IX. We recommend that the leadership of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC Forum take immediate steps to explore the possibility of "getting together" in ways that will enhance and promote our mutually strong beliefs as expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

X. We recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention continue the present 22 members of the SBC Peace Committee to serve for up to, but not to exceed, three years for the purpose of observing the response of all agencies, officers and other participants to the recommendations of the Peace Committee in an effort to encourage compliance and foster harmonious working relationships among all segments of our Baptist family. The Peace Committee would meet once each year at a time of its own choosing and would make an appropriate report to each annual session of the Convention.

V. Acknowledgements

1. The Peace Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided us by the office and staff of Dr. Harold C. Bennett, president-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. Special appreciation is due Mrs. Martha T. Gaddis, administrative assistant to Dr. Bennett, and to Mr. Dan Martin, news editor of Baptist Press.

2. The Peace Committee expresses gratitude to the host of Southern Baptists and to Christians of other denominations who have faithfully prayed for the work of the Committee throughout its existence.

Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee Charles G. Fuller, Chairman

- Report of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, Item 153, Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1987 *SBC Annual*, pp. 56; 232-242

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