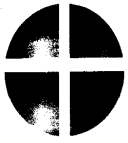


UNITED STATES CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE



# NEWS

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## **BAPTISTS, CATHOLICS DISCUSS THEIR VIEWS ON SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY**

WASHINGTON--The third meeting of the present round of Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic Conversations met at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, September 11-13. The meeting centered on a discussion of the common understanding, and the differences, between the two communities on the topic of Scripture and its authority.

Dr. Paige Patterson, President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, gave a Southern Baptist view of the Roman Catholic position on Scripture, as outlined in the Decree on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council. The discussion which followed among Baptist and Catholic theologians present served to clarify misunderstandings, note differences, and articulate common areas of the Christian faith in the normative character and principles of interpretation of the Bible. While Baptists and Catholics both place considerable emphasis on biblical authority and its normative place in Christian life, differences over tradition, the role of the teaching authority in interpreting the Bible, and the critical tools to be used in biblical interpretation were all clarified.

Participants agreed that while the two communities share much in understanding God's revelation in Jesus Christ, this common faith should not obscure the real differences nor deter from the work of further conversation.

The Conversation authorized a report on the findings of three years of research and study. It reviewed a common explication of terms like inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, infallibility, critical methods, literalism and literal sense, and fundamentalism. The report is expected before next year's meeting in Louisville.

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Bishop J. Kendrick Williams of Lexington co-chairs the Conversation for the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). His counterpart is Dr. Philip Roberts, Director of the Interfaith Witness Division of the National Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A luncheon was hosted by Dr. Timothy George, President of Beeson Divinity School. Bishops Williams brought greetings on behalf of the Bishops' Conference and Dr. Troy Morrison, Executive Secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, reciprocated for the Baptist community.

At the luncheon Dr. Roberts emphasized the learning experience members of the group have had with one another over the years, and how he wished every Baptist could have this type of experience with Catholics. Brother Jeffrey Gros, associate director of ecumenical and interreligious affairs for the NCCB, expressed appreciation for the work of seminary professors in deepening interest in other churches and in teaching a new generation of leaders how best to develop relations with fellow Christians in other churches. He noted the importance of this conversation between the two largest Christian bodies for world wide Christianity and for the mission of the churches.

The Conversation began its planning for the next phase which will touch on Baptist-Catholic differences on salvation and justification (soteriology). Father Joseph Fitzmyer, SJ, of the Catholic University of America shared the Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith, under consideration by the Catholic Church and the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation, and its basis for resolving some of the issues that have divided Protestants and Catholics since the Reformation. Dr. George outlined Baptist history, especially as it relates to important influences from Calvin and Puritanism in Baptist understandings of how God saves us by the grace of Jesus Christ.

On the basis of these presentations, the Conversation decided on the next steps in its study of the issue of grace, justification and the salvation of non-Christians.

Prior to the meeting, Samford University sponsored a student-faculty conversation, "One Family in Christ." Father Francis Ruff of the Glenmary Home Missioners, field representative of the NCCB to the Southern Baptist Convention, provided the major presentation.

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