CONVENTION ENDS

Baptists Hit Abortion, Support 'Creationism'

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Southern Baptists have ended their massive convention with demands for prayer and teaching of "creationism" in public schools and a sweeping condemnation of abortion.

"Social acceptance of abortion has begun to dull society's respect for all human life, leading to growing occurrences of infanticide, child abuse and active euthanasia," the church assembly said.

The Rev. James M. Dunn of Washington, D.C., head of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which has strongly opposed public school prayers, said of the convention's support of them:

"It is incredibly out of keeping with the historic Baptist position on religious liberty and separation of church and state."

However, in backing President Reagan's proposed amendment for such prayers, the convention said they would not violate the separation principle but that the current banning of them "cripples religious liberty."

The action came by an overwhelming margin, estimated at three-to one among the 20,400 "messengers," after sharp debate.

But the convention then adjourned late Thursday on a harmonious note, with words of good will and cooperation between conservative fundamentalist and moderate forces in the denomination.

A "peaceful conclusion," observed the Rev. James T. Draper of Euless, Texas, the newly elected conservative president. "This will help heal some wounds."

Calling it a "conciliatory spirit," the outgoing president, the Rev. Bailey Smith of Del City, Okla., also a conservative, said, "Let's bind together in spreading the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the action on abortion and infanticide, Mrs. Skeet Workman of Lubbock, Texas, cited the recent Indiana case in which an infant with Down's syndrome was allowed to die of starvation, saying:

"We started out with approval of abortion and have now moved forward to approval of infanticide."

The Rev. Calvin Kelly of Montgomery, Ala., said that abortion is causing the "senseless slaughter of more than 400 preborn babies a day," calling it "the shame of our civilized country."

In supporting the action for school prayers, the Rev. Charles Stanley of Atlanta said secular forces in America are eroding religious freedom and trying to create a society devoid "of any religious influence."

He said the courts now "protect pornographers on the streets while prohibiting prayers in the schools."

The convention, in backing the teaching of "scientific creationism" in public schools, said it can be done "solely in terms of scientific evidence without any religious doctrines or concepts."

The convention shelved for study a proposed broad support for Israel and for Jews as the "chosen people of God," after objections that it would cripple Middle East missions, mainly among Arabs.

In other actions, the convention:

- Opposed tuition tax credits for parents of students in private or church elementary and secondary schools.
- Voiced support for "mutually verifiable disarmament, including nuclear disarmament."
- Urged legislation requiring labeling of alcoholic beverages as dangerous.
- Asked television networks to show more concern for the "moral tone" of programs and urged support for commercial sponsors of "clean, constructive, wholesome" programs.