
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Opposition to Rankin
building among trustees

By Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- A movement is building that could keep Jerry Rankin from being elected president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board June 14.

The nomination of missionary/administrator Rankin, which at first seemed almost assured, now faces stiff opposition from the more conservative FMB trustees, who say Rankin's openness to charismatic practices should disqualify him from leading the Southern Baptist Convention's 3,900 missionaries worldwide.

"There are 15 to 25 (trustees) who, if push came to shove, would vote against him, no matter how bad it would look," said trustee William Sutton, a pastor from McAllen, Texas.

That may prove enough, since conservatives succeeded last year in requiring that the new FMB president be approved by 75 percent of trustees. Only 22 negative votes from among the board's 87 members are needed to block the nomination.

But the 15-member search committee clearly hopes its unanimous recommendation of Rankin, coupled with the endorsement of the SBC's top conservative leaders, will preempt an embarrassing showdown when trustees vote June 14 in Houston, one day prior to the opening of the annual SBC meeting in that city.

Joel Gregory, chairman of the search committee, said the group will stand by its nominee. "We have no question he will be elected," said Gregory, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas. "If there are votes against him, they will be isolated votes against him."

Rankin is an avowed inerrantist sympathetic to the 14-year movement to steer the SBC to a more conservative course. But some hard-line conservative leaders question Rankin's commitment to that cause, saying privately he has not been visible enough in the conservative movement.

Gregory said Rankin is "very much a friend of the conservative resurgence," but noted he has not been "directly involved in the politics" of that movement because of his service overseas.

He said the issue of Rankin's charismatic leanings is being "raised by people who either don't understand the situation or are using it as a pretext because they wanted another candidate."

The dispute may boil down to competing definitions of tongues-speaking.

Rankin admits to "praying in the Spirit," considered by most charismatics to be a private use of the spiritual gift of tongues -- unintelligible "ecstatic utterances" believed to demonstrate the Holy Spirit's presence and power in a believer's life.

He also acknowledges interpreting, or translating, a message spoken in tongues during a public worship service in Singapore, where he serves as area director for the FMB's 480 missionaries in Southern Asia and the Pacific.

Those practices almost cost Rankin his job in 1991, when his views put him at odds with some FMB administrators.

But the nominee insists he does not have the spiritual gift of tongues or interpretation, although he acknowledges those gifts are valid. He defines biblical tongues-speaking as a gift for public use, while his experience with what some call a "prayer language" has been limited to his private devotions. His one-time experience interpreting tongues was an isolated event and not evidence of a permanent spiritual gift, he said.

Many Baptists discount all evidence of tongues-speaking, which they say is no longer a valid spiritual gift. Their position, part of a theological system called dispensationalism, is typified by Paige Patterson, a former FMB trustee and now president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

According to Gregory, Patterson has discussed Rankin's nomination with trustees and SBC leaders. Patterson denied being part of a movement to dump Rankin, but he added, "Everybody knows there is opposition."

Patterson declined to assess Rankin's position on tongues except to say "it is not a prevalent view" among Southern Baptists. If Rankin distinguishes between tongues and devotional prayer languages, "it needs to be clear he is making that distinction," Patterson said. Then trustees will decide Rankin's fitness for office.

"It is imperative that the denomination be informed clearly, plainly and unequivocally whether or not he believes ecstatic utterance is the biblical gift of tongues and whether or not it is operative today," Patterson said.

But Gregory said the dispensational view -- that the spiritual gifts ceased soon after the Christian era started -- "is by no means necessarily the pervasive Southern Baptist view. ... There is no one Southern Baptist viewpoint concerning the operational nature of spiritual gifts at the present time."

Gregory, who like Patterson is a leader among SBC conservatives, suggested conservatives should not allow Rankin's views to divide their

camp.

"The integrity of the conservative resurgence really depends upon the advocacy of the inerrancy of the Bible, not on a certain interpretation or hermeneutic," said Gregory.

"The candidate and his critics all share belief in the inerrancy of the Scripture," he continued. "Here we're dealing with a desire by some to enforce an interpretation that may well be a minority viewpoint among Southern Baptists as a whole."

Gregory said those trustees who oppose Rankin "should get up and express their convictions in an open meeting with the man present."

That's not likely to happen, however. Trustees have scheduled a closed session June 14 during which they will question Rankin. Afterward, his nomination is scheduled for a roll-call vote with the public and reporters present.

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-- This story includes information from Robert O'Brien of the Foreign Mission Board.

Modern fathers called
both best, worst

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- To borrow a line from Dickens, the 1990s are proving to be the best of times and the worst of times for fathering in America.

Ask experts about the state of fathering, and they'll almost uniformly recite two contradictory trends: More men than ever are concerned about being good fathers, but more children than ever are being raised in homes where no father is present.

Unfortunately, most hasten to add, the trend toward fatherlessness outweighs the concern about being a good father.

And, they report, fatherlessness is not something that happens only to children whose fathers don't live in the same house. Many live-at-home fathers are absent emotionally or even physically.

Ken Canfield, a former Southern Baptist who is executive director of the National Center for Fathering in Manhattan, Kan., calls this the "good dad/bad dad syndrome."

"Never before have fathers been so interested in fathering, and never before have fathers been so delinquent in fathering," he explained.

"We've got things going both ways," concurred Diana Garland, dean of the school of social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and director of the Gheens Center for Family Ministry there.

"More and more biological fathers are walking away from their children and never coming back," she explained. "Fifty percent of children in single-parent families have not seen their fathers in the past year.

"On the other side, our expectations of fathers have increased dramatically," Garland said, and many fathers are doing more than ever before with their children.

Yet for every conscientious father in America, there are probably another four fatherless homes, said David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values in New York City and author of a forthcoming book called "Fatherless America."

"The overall trend is toward a shrinking of fatherhood as a social role, toward a denigration of fatherhood as a vocation," he said.

Previous eras of fatherlessness -- such as during war time or when killer diseases ran rampant -- are no comparison to today's problem, Blankenhorn asserted. "This is the first crisis of fatherlessness in our society that has been of a voluntary nature."

At least part of the problem appears to be the sins of one generation of fathers visiting the next generation in magnified form.

Based on extensive research with fathers, Canfield has found there's "a tremendous amount of baggage men are carrying that inhibits them from fathering. Part of it can be the father wound they feel in their own lives. Part can be the entrapments of society."

The "father wound" is an issue Ed Smith encounters nearly every day. As a Christian counselor in Campbellsville, Ky., about 75 percent of the males he counsels are "emotionally still in bondage to their pursuit of hearing their fathers say, 'I love you,' Smith said.

"They are chasing after the phantom of affirmation that they're never going to get," he said, explaining that quest causes men to become overachievers, workaholics and distant to their own children.

Yet even the neglect today's fathers may have felt from their own fathers is mild in comparison to what many children experience today, according to Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, a research associate with Blankenhorn at the Institute for American Values.

"A favorite complaint among baby boom Americans is that their fathers were emotionally remote guys who worked hard, came home at night to eat supper and didn't have much to say to or do with the kids," she wrote in an article published in the April issue of The Atlantic Monthly.

"But the current generation has a far worse father problem: many of their fathers are vanishing entirely."

The grief of "father wounds" and the state of modern American culture combine to create a deadly mix for children, Blankenhorn said.

"America is becoming fatherless in a cultural sense," he said. "We are losing the idea of fatherhood.

"In other words, a generation ago, if you asked Americans, 'Do children need fathers?' Americans would say, 'Yes, of course they do.' The idea of a child losing a father, usually through death, was considered a tragedy.

Not so today, he said. "Today if you ask if children need fathers, the answer is generally, 'Not necessarily.' We have all kinds of reasons we say children can do fine without fathers."

Yet the overwhelming evidence of social research shows that children do need fathers, Blankenhorn and others contend.

The key social problems facing America -- crime, violence, teen pregnancy, drugs, domestic violence -- all can be linked to the trend of fatherlessness, Blankenhorn said.

"In each case the evidence is quite clear that fatherlessness is an engine behind many of our most serious social problems," he warned. "Unless we reverse the trend toward fatherlessness, there's very little reason to

think we can reverse these social problems."

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Selfishness of adults
takes toll on children

By Mark Wingfield

NEW YORK (ABP) -- American adults are pursuing their own happiness to the woeful neglect of their children, a social researcher warns.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, research associate with the Institute for American Values in New York City, cites an avalanche of alarming statistics resulting from this trend in a 21-page article published in the April issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Whitehead spoke about family issues to a gathering of Southern Baptists last February at a conference sponsored by the Baptist Center for Ethics. However, the institute she is associated with is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank.

Although it is not politically correct to say so, Whitehead claims, the facts are that "divorce and out-of-wedlock childbirth are transforming the lives of American children."

"If we fail to come to terms with the relationship between family structure and declining child well-being, then it will be increasingly difficult to improve children's life prospects, no matter how many new programs the federal government funds," she contends.

Her article, titled "Dan Quayle was Right," claims Americans have closed their eyes to the devastation inflicted on children by divorce, single-parent families, cohabitation and multiple marriages.

Whitehead contends society has become too accepting of alternative family structures and that the stigmas that held such deviations in check have wrongly been eliminated. Social research proves the best environment for children is a traditional family, where both mother and father live together, she writes.

Among her statistical reports:

-- In the postwar generation, more than 80 percent of children grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other. By 1980, only 50 percent could expect to spend their entire childhood in an intact family.

-- Less than half of all children born today are likely to live continuously with their own mother and father throughout childhood.

-- Children in single-parent families are six times more likely to be poor than children living in two-parent families.

-- Twenty-two percent of children in one-parent families will experience poverty during childhood for seven years or more, compared to only 2 percent of children in two-parent families.

-- Children in single-parent families are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems, to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs and to get in trouble with the law.

-- One of every four women who had a child in 1990 was not married.

-- Half as many people get divorced each year as get married.

-- Both cohabiting and remarried couples are more likely to break up than couples in first marriages.

-- After divorce, the average annual income of mothers and children is \$13,500 for whites and \$9,000 for non-whites, compared with \$25,000 for white non-resident fathers and \$13,600 for non-white non-resident fathers.

-- In "disrupted families," only one child in six sees his or her father as often as once a week. Close to half have not seen their father in the past year.

-- More than half the increase in child poverty in the 1980s is attributable to changes in family structure.

-- More than 70 percent of all juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes.

"Given its dramatic impact on children's lives, one might reasonably expect that this historic level of family disruption would be viewed with alarm, even regarded as a national crisis," Whitehead writes. "Yet this has not been the case. ...

"The dominant view is that the changes in family structure are, on balance, positive."

There are several reasons for this positive perception of family change, she notes, but the primary reason is that Americans have redefined what is good.

"What had once been regarded as hostile to children's best interests was now considered essential to adults' happiness," she writes.

For example, in the past most Americans believed parents should stay in an unhappy marriage for the sake of the children, Whitehead notes. But by the mid-1970s, Americans had rejected that view.

"Once the social metric shifts from child well-being to adult well-being, it is hard to see divorce and non-marital birth in anything but a positive light," she explains.

The American political climate of the past 30 years has not been willing to tolerate discussion of family issues, Whitehead writes. She recalls when in the mid-1960s, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then an assistant secretary of labor, was labeled a racist for noting the relationship between the prevalence of black single-mother families and the lower socio-economic standing of black children.

On the political scene, "every time the issue of family structure has been raised, the response has been first controversy, then retreat, and finally silence."

The effects of family breakup do not impact only the poorest portion of the black community, Whitehead writes.

For example, the finding that 70 percent of juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes applies equally to blacks and whites, people from low-income and high-income families.

One study summarizes the relationship between crime and one-parent families in this way, she explains: "The relationship is so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. This conclusion shows up time and again in the literature."

Children need fathers' time
for affirmation, role modeling

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- What do children need most from their fathers? Consistently taking the time to provide affirmation and a good role model is a common answer from experts in family issues.

"One of the things children need today is a constructive masculine image," said Robert Parham, director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, an independent "pro-family" organization based in Nashville, Tenn.

"By that I do not mean the 1950s image where the father is a jock, eats red meat, and is the lord of the household," he explained. "Rather, I think the masculine image that's needed today is found in things such as faithfulness to the wife, commitment to the family through shared chores and responsibilities, and direct investment in the children's education and social growth."

Deciding to be a good father is an ethical decision, Parham said.

"What we need is for men in general and fathers in particular to have a value of responsibility to the family rather than the value of expressive individualism," he declared.

"Individualism means my individual rights outweigh my community responsibility," Parham explained, while the proper response should be to put the needs of the family first in an unselfish fashion.

Yet even for the best-intentioned fathers, this demand presents a tremendous conflict, Parham and others agree.

"One of the hardest things I struggle with is a lack of time," confessed Ed Smith, a Christian counselor in Campbellsville, Ky., and father of three young children.

A national survey by the Barna Research Group discovered a majority of American parents do not get to spend as much time as they would like with their children.

Barna research among teenagers found that even in homes where fathers live with the child, fathers spend an average of only 15 minutes per week in significant interaction with the teenager.

A large majority of parents insist what matters is not the quantity of time spent with children but the quality, George Barna noted in his new book, "The Future of the American Family."

Yet most research has found no support for that rationalization, Barna reported. "The children that grow up best adjusted and happiest in life are those whose parents spent considerable amounts of quality time with them."

"Most fathers that I know anything about are so wrapped up in career that family gets kind of second best," added Charlie Warren, editor of Home Life magazine, published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"I think we as fathers need to give a higher priority to our families," said the father of two boys. "Most of the time, all of us are guilty of thinking our main function is providing for the family. But our children would be a lot healthier if we gave them more attention."

Fathering really isn't that hard, it just requires commitment, Smith, the counselor, said. "It requires me to stop my world, enter their world, play with them and give them unconditional regard. That's not hard to do. It just means stopping, slowing down and saying, 'You're important to me.'"

A commitment to that kind of fathering will impact other areas of a man's life, noted Diana Garland, dean of the social work school at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and director of the Gheens Center for Family Ministry.

"When's the last time a father walked into the office and said, 'I'm sorry, I can't take that promotion. I can't travel that much because I need to spend more time with my children'?" Garland asked.

"We expect women to do things like that, but what about fathers?"

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Researcher lists seven
secrets of fathering

MANHATTAN, Kan. (ABP) -- Through research gathered from more than 4,000 fathers over a five-year period, Ken Canfield has found what he calls "Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers."

Canfield, executive director of the National Center for Fathering, based in Manhattan, Kan., details these seven attributes in a book by the same title.

In short, the secrets are:

- Commitment to the child.
- Knowing the child.
- Acting consistently.
- Protecting and providing for the child.
- Loving the child's mother.
- Listening actively to the child.
- Equipping the child spiritually.

Canfield's book, published by Tyndale, includes a discussion guide for study groups. His non-profit organization also provides curriculum, videos and other printed resources for churches to launch fathering awareness ministries.

The National Center for Fathering may be addressed at Box 1918, Manhattan, Kan. 66502.

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Young says Presbyterian
comment misinterpreted

HOUSTON (ABP) -- A recent magazine article about Southern Baptist Convention president Ed Young, in which Young reportedly said he could just as easily be Presbyterian as Southern Baptist, was misinterpreted, according to Young.

"Houston's Exciting Second," a story in the May-June issue of MissionsUSA, a Home Mission Board magazine, stated that Second Baptist Church of Houston, where Young is the pastor, is the prime example of today's megachurches, specializing in the "niche marketing of baby

boomers."

"We are not legalistic and dogmatic," Young said, speaking to a group of new members. The story by Mike Livingston paraphrased Young as adding that he could just as easily be Presbyterian as Southern Baptist.

"And if we were naming the church today," Young was quoted as saying, "Baptist probably wouldn't even be in the name. So many people who join our church aren't Baptists and we don't try to make them Baptists. Generic things are where the thinking baby boomers are today."

The quotes in the magazine story have prompted many letters to the editors of Baptist state papers, and Young told the Baptist Standard he has received inquiries about the remark.

"The quote was out of the context of what I said," Young told the Standard. "I was talking to a group of about 200 new members, including 50 or so prospects at a luncheon. Somebody asked me the difference between Baptists and other denominations.

"I said, for example, Presbyterians are closest to us (Southern Baptists) in theology. When the Arminians and Calvinists jumped the fence (in moving away from Catholicism), we jumped the fence with the Presbyterians.

But Young said he disagrees with Presbyterian church polity, which is more episcopal. "Theologically yes, governmentally no."

"I said I could probably easily be a Presbyterian, theologically, but that is all."

There are no plans to change the church's name, Young said. It will remain Second Baptist Church.

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-- By Toby Druin

Speakers emphasize Baptist
distinctives at Texas rally

DALLAS (ABP) -- More than 500 Texas Baptists gathered June 4-5 in Dallas to tout the historic Baptist distinctives of soul competence, the priesthood of the believer, autonomy of local congregations and separation of church and state -- pillars of Baptist heritage they say are under attack by fundamentalism.

The event was the first annual convocation of Texas Baptists Committed, an organization dedicated to keeping the 2.6 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas focused on missions, evangelism and education and out of the hands of Southern Baptist fundamentalists.

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, likened the 14-year struggle between Southern Baptist moderates and fundamentalists to the fall of Humpty Dumpty, because fundamentalists have "pulled the rug out from under the Baptist furniture, denied the distinctives that make us Baptist."

The fundamentalists have disturbed Baptists' "basic ingredient, freedom of religion," Dunn said.

"Our freedom is rooted not in the Constitution of the United States,

the Bill of Rights (or) history," he explained. "Our freedom is rooted not in a church, a creed, a belief, a book, not even the Bible. It is rooted in the nature of God."

Dunn said soul freedom, religious liberty and church-state separation are like three concentric circles. "At the center in the smallest circle burns the biblical, theological doctrine of soul freedom with which we began -- made, somehow, in God's image ... intended to be free and responsible."

"The next ring outward, religious liberty is the moral and social consequence of voluntary faith and personal conversion. If we claim that freedom for ourselves, we must defend it for others, too."

"Finally, the outer circle is the separation of church and state, the constitutional principle that serves as a fence, a guardrail, a wall protecting individual religious freedom."

Dunn commended Texas Baptists, who during the "seismic upheaval in Baptist life" have "doggedly determined to remain Baptist."

James Denison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Midland, urged participants to "stay Baptist" for the sake of 8.5 million non-Christians in Texas.

He said that he had stayed out of the battle for the SBC for several years, but came to the conviction he must be involved. "Taking a stand today comes at a risk and at a price. But we must tell them (fundamentalists) that they cannot have the BGCT," Denison said to a standing, cheering ovation.

Donald Schmeltekopf, an administrator at Baylor University in Waco, told participants that freedom in education is "ultimately based on liberty of conscience."

"Freedom in education is not the goal of the learning community, but it is the necessary condition for the purposes entrusted to us for the common good," said Schmeltekopf, Baylor's vice president and chief operating officer for academic affairs.

The Baptist Committed meeting also included four speakers -- a Hispanic, a woman, an Africa-American and a rural pastor -- who gave testimonies about their dreams for Texas Baptists.

David Currie, coordinator of Texas Baptists, explained the rationale for the meeting. "We felt it was important to have a rally to honor the traditional distinctives which made Southern Baptists and Texas Baptists great," said Currie, of San Angelo, Texas.

"This is particularly important now since the leadership of the SBC no longer identifies with these principles."

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Texas board affirms
state, national WMU

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Woman's Missionary Unions of Texas and the Southern Baptist Convention were reaffirmed for their missions support in a resolution adopted at the quarterly meeting of the Texas Baptist Executive Board, June 8.

The 193-member board, which handles business of the 2.5 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas between annual convention sessions, also adopted resolutions commending two of its institutions for their Christian ministries during the Branch Davidian tragedy in Waco, Texas, this spring.

In the WMU resolution, presented by Ron Gunter, pastor of First Baptist Church of Henrietta, Texas, the board expressed appreciation for the "close and cordial relationship with WMU" and "the firm resolve of WMU to call out Baptists everywhere to deeper and more effective missions commitments."

The national WMU has been under attack from Southern Baptist conservatives for its plans to work with moderate Baptist organizations and other evangelical groups.

The resolution noted that both the Texas and national Woman's Missionary Unions have "effectively challenged Baptists to fulfill the Great Commission" for over a century while helping to raise more than \$2 billion for mission causes.

The board commended Hillcrest Baptist Hospital in Waco and Baptist Children's Homes in San Antonio for outstanding ministries to victims of the tragedy at the Branch Davidian compound.

The Baptist hospital provided medical care to 16 agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms who were wounded in the Feb. 28 shootout with members of the followers of David Koresh.

The children's home set up an emergency child-care facility at an undisclosed location in Waco to care for 12 of the children who were released to their care in the early stages of the 51-day standoff.

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-- By Orville Scott

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