
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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IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Rankin urges WMU to refuse Fellowship's \$100,000 gift
- * Trustees break silence about seminary president's firing
- * Southwestern pioneers would find trustees 'repugnant'
- * Endowed chair at Southeastern to honor Bailey Smith
- * North Carolina chapter of Fellowship organized
- * Clarification
- * Correction
- * Christians must channel care into commitment, experts say
- * America needs more fathers, fewer prisons, speaker says
- * Fathers play many roles, seminar speaker says
- * 'Sins' of ministry outlined by Killinger
- * Suspicion divides clergy, journalists, study reveals
- * Religion/media studies suggest different findings
- * Covering SBC struggle poses challenge for secular media

Rankin urges WMU to refuse Fellowship's \$100,000 gift

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Woman's Missionary Union should turn down a \$100,000 gift from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin told WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien at a meeting in Nashville, Tenn., last month.

Since then, WMU has undertaken a poll of its executive board to determine if the group wants to stand by or back away from a policy it adopted last year to accept such unsolicited contributions.

The Fellowship's coordinating council approved a one-time gift to WMU of \$100,000 from its global missions offering in mid-February. The gift was not at WMU's request and was offered without their knowledge, Keith Parks, the Fellowship's missions coordinator said.

Last year WMU agreed to provide missions material and prayer support -- but not financial support -- to the Fellowship and other non-SBC mission groups. The decision created controversy with some SBC leaders, including Foreign Mission Board trustees, who said it undermined the 106-year-old missions auxiliary's "exclusive" relationship with the convention.

Rankin's remark came at the close of a February meeting of the Missions Education Council, a joint planning group with staff representatives from the Foreign Mission, Home Mission and Sunday School boards, the Brotherhood Commission and WMU.

"It's very important for it to be reported in the context of what our meeting was all about," said Rankin, when asked about his statement by

Associated Baptist Press March 15.

"We spend this two-hour meeting on an agenda that is talking about working together, cooperation (and) supporting Southern Baptist Convention missions, and of course the WMU is a very key player in that. In concluding the meeting, we were expressing various concerns. I just made the comment I would hope that the WMU does not accept this offer of funds from the CBF and therefore will send a very clear and unequivocal signal to Southern Baptists that they are standing behind the unified and exclusive support of the Foreign Mission Board and Home Mission Board."

O'Brien said Rankin's statement came at the end of "a wonderful meeting where we had planned good cooperative ventures." "I was a little surprised he would encourage us not to take it since we were the only entity in the SBC who had not taken money from the CBF," she said.

The Foreign Mission Board received \$1.6 million from the Fellowship in 1993. The WMU is not part of the Fellowship's budget.

In an expansion of the WMU's scope last year, the organization's executive board set up a procedure for accepting contributions to be used for WMU and related missions needs.

A number of smaller gifts have been accepted, O'Brien said, but none as large or public as the Fellowship's \$100,000 contribution.

The WMU finance committee decided to include the entire executive board in the decision about the Fellowship gift, even though the changes approved in 1993 gave the committee the authority to handle undesignated gifts.

"The question is are we affirming that (1993) decision, or are there second thoughts about it," O'Brien said.

State WMU leaders were contacted by conference calls and fax. Their decision on what to do with the Fellowship gift is expected "in the next couple of weeks," O'Brien said March 16.

One participant in the Nashville meeting, Brotherhood Vice President Douglas Beggs, said Rankin's statement about the Fellowship gift was "somewhat awkward" because "it did not fit in the context of the meeting," which had focused primarily on planning of missions education curriculum.

Beggs said Rankin's comment appeared to be based on a genuine concern that accepting the gift could create a backlash against WMU because of the Fellowship's negative image among some SBC leaders.

"Jerry was concerned that this would fuel or precipitate a decision by others," he said.

In the weeks following the conversation, rumors filtered across the convention that if the WMU accepts the money, Foreign Mission Board trustees might retaliate by asking WMU to no longer promote the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which was begun by WMU in 1888 and provides nearly half of the FMB's annual budget.

"I don't think there's any validity to that whatsoever," Rankin said when asked about the rumor.

He dismissed concerns that relationships between the FMB and WMU are deteriorating. "I've tried to strengthen and affirm our relationship" and have "expressed appreciation for the partnership" with WMU publicly and repeatedly, he said.

Rankin said he believes the Fellowship's gift to WMU "is very clearly a different type of issue" from SBC agencies accepting funds designated for them by churches and individuals using Fellowship giving plans. In those cases, he said, the Fellowship is merely "a conduit, passing on designated funds" to various areas of SBC work.

The SBC Executive Committee is currently pursuing a study of the "impact" of Fellowship funds on SBC agencies and is expected to recommend whether or not those funds should be accepted at a June 13 meeting, just

before the June 14-16 SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla.

WMU has not decided how it will spend the Fellowship money if it does elect to accept the gift, O'Brien said. That, also, is being discussed by the executive board, she added.

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Trustee statement breaks silence
about seminary president's firing

By Bob Allen and Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- As criticism of the firing of Baptist seminary president Russell Dilday mounted, trustees of the school issued a statement March 11 defending their action.

When trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary fired Dilday March 10, they refused to state their reasons. Following a bitter reaction from students and some Baptist leaders, however, the seminary's public relations office issued a news release March 11.

The release, which carried no byline, quoted a trustee statement, letters to the seminary community and an unnamed "trustee spokesman."

The news release said "irreconcilable differences" between trustees and president led to the vote to fire Dilday. The seminary bylaws give trustees "full authority" for the action, the release said. A board spokesman, whom the seminary declined to identify, said "no other changes are expected" in seminary leadership.

Dilday's "reluctance to move in concert with policies established by the board brought constant concern to the trustees and often led to gridlock within the administration and to his stonewalling the board," the statement said.

"Also, Dr. Dilday has continued to speak out on political issues fostered by others, in contradiction to his earlier agreement with the trustees not to do so," the statement said.

Trustees emphasized that while trustees had reached a philosophical stalemate in working with Dilday, he earned high marks for his personal skills and relationships.

Houston pastor Damon Shook, outgoing trustee chairman, said the relationship between the president and board members was "difficult to deal with. He (Dilday) was confrontational and critical and the conflict seemed to accelerate in recent years with frequent attacks on trustees for lack of cooperation."

Trustees who voted against firing Dilday, however, objected strongly to the way the board handled the conflict.

"I cannot tell you how devastated I am," said trustee Wayne Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church of Carrollton, Texas, who reportedly voted against firing. "I cannot believe how unchristian it was, the way it was handled."

Allen, a conservative who was defeated by moderates in his bid for the Texas Baptist presidency last year, said a trustee told him the vote on Dilday was going to be 28-6 and there wasn't anything he could do about it. The final vote reportedly was 26-7.

"It was a done deal," Allen told the Dallas Morning News.

"It seemed like the majority had already decided ... and they knew the number of votes they had," echoed trustee Bob Anderson of Baton Rouge, La., who voted for Dilday. "We knew they had the votes, so we decided we'd better go for the financial package or we'd lose everything."

Dilday supporters were able to get Dilday 18 months severance pay and other benefits.

Trustee chairman Ralph Pulley of Dallas, who made the motion to fire Dilday, told the Dallas Morning News: "There was some work done prior to going into the executive session. I don't know why it makes any difference at this point."

Pulley, a Dallas attorney, declined to discuss the chain of events leading up to Dilday's dismissal.

"We've made every effort to stabilize the situation," he told Associated Baptist Press, and said "there's no reason" to go into a description of details of the decision.

"I personally think the thing has been building up for about four years," Pulley said. "I can assure you it was not a sudden thing."

Pulley served on Southwestern's board from 1975 to 1987 and opposed Dilday's election in 1978. After Dilday's election, however, Pulley said, "I offered and gave my support of Dr. Dilday's presidency consistently."

He denied he was re-elected to the board in 1992 for the purpose of getting rid of Dilday. "I'm sorry there's that kind of feeling among some of the brethren," he said. "That's in the past and had nothing to do with what took place here."

"I came back with an open mind and with hope that things would be fine and we would move back down the road," Pulley said.

Pulley defended the much-maligned action of trustees locking Dilday out of his office after the firing. "We just felt like that was something that ought to be done at the moment," he said, adding it was "certainly no reflection on the integrity of Dr. Dilday."

Asked why trustees felt it was necessary, Pulley said, "I don't really have a reason."

Pulley said Dilday has responded to the firing with dignity. Considering his experience with Dilday, he said, "I would expect him to."

Trustee Allen predicted the Dilday firing is "going to further divide the convention. It's going to drive more of our churches into the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (a rival moderate organization) than they could have recruited in the next five years."

"It's another blow to bring about division," agreed Anderson.

But Southern Baptist president Ed Young of Houston said Dilday's firing was an internal dispute that will have little impact on the Southern Baptist Convention. "It's not an SBC matter," he told the Morning News.

-30-

Southwestern pioneers would find trustees 'repugnant,' daughter says

By Bob Allen

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Portraits of Edwin and Polly McNeely should be removed from the music school they helped create at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary because the seminary is now controlled by the type of people the McNeelys found "repugnant," said the couple's only daughter.

Marilyn McNeely Dunn asked seminary administrators March 15 to remove the portraits of her parents that hang in Cowden Hall, home of Southwestern's School of Church Music.

The music school has been a flash point in the conflict over the direction of Southern Baptists' largest seminary -- a conflict that

culminated March 9 in the firing of seminary President Russell Dilday by trustees.

"All who knew my feisty father will join me in the strong suspicion that though he went home to be with the Lord 10 years ago and now hangs framed in Cowden Hall, he will climb off that wall and take his leave since the seminary is no longer the one he knew and loved," said Dunn, whose husband, James, is executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee in Washington, D.C.

Trustees cited "irreconcilable differences" in firing Dilday, whom they said was resistant to the conservative swing in the Southern Baptist Convention. Among the changes sought by the majority of trustees was a new direction in the School of Church Music.

Some trustees insisted the music school temper its traditional, classical emphasis with more attention to popular music, including praise choruses. In recent months trustees blocked the election of two deans for the music school, in part because trustees felt the nominees would only perpetuate past practices and not make desired changes.

It is a controversy reminiscent of the early days of Southwestern's music school, when Edwin McNeely and others resisted pressures by fundamentalists like J. Frank Norris, who wanted the school to stick to training in popular church music.

"Today's generation of Baptists are largely unaware of the indignities and mean-spiritness of Fundamentalism, often targeted at my parents and their commitment to quality church music," Dunn wrote in her letter.

Yet Dunn suggested the seminary is run by trustees who resemble McNeely's earlier fundamentalist foes.

It is "an unthinkable mockery" for the likenesses of her parents "to bless an institution controlled by precisely the sort of people so repugnant to everything for which the McNeelys stood," she continued.

A music faculty comprised of legendary musicians B.B. McKinney, I.E. Reynolds, McNeely and their wives stood by their determination to build a school of academically sound and classically trained church musicians. The McNeelys taught at the school 40 years, including the Depression years, when they worked for little or no salary.

Today the school is fully accredited and widely acclaimed.

Yet in recent years trustees repeatedly discussed with Dilday their conviction that Southwestern's approach is "far behind what is going on in churches today," said trustee T. Bob Davis, a Dallas dentist who backed Dilday's firing.

Trustees have pushed for "a new approach to a broad-based teaching of music," but found the current music school faculty unresponsive to their concerns, said Davis, who is active in the music ministry of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas.

Surveys done by the seminary "overwhelmingly indicate a need for a balanced teaching in the music area" involving "liturgical, traditional, gospel, contemporary, even seeker-service type music," Davis said.

Southwestern's thrust "has been liturgical, classical training, which none of us have any problem with," Davis said. "But that must be your core, not the entire offering of the seminary."

Dilday would admit privately that the school needed to diversify its music training, Davis said, but he was unable to make needed changes with the existing faculty.

"It was a true power-driven school issue," he said. "Even the president couldn't break it. Philosophically we were at loggerheads with the music school's existing leadership."

Trustees were satisfied to replace faculty by attrition, Davis

contended. When James McKinney, dean of the school for 37 years, announced his retirement last year, it seemed a logical time to make a change, he said.

However, Dilday's recommendations for McKinney's successor were "people within the system who had the same bent, same philosophy and the same approach." That prompted trustees to block the two recommendations for dean.

"Let's be honest, after awhile you realize you are being stonewalled," Davis said. "The trustees wanted another approach, but Russell and the entrenched old guard was bound and determined to foil any effort to succeed."

Davis said the music-school controversy was "a big element" in Dilday's firing, but not the only one. "This was a part of the overall puzzle that suddenly fit together. It was a big puzzle that began to fit together. No one factor itself was responsible for Russell's end event."

Southwestern's administrative offices were closed March 17 for spring break. Dunn's letter was addressed to Provost William Tolar, who was contacted at home. Tolar told Associated Baptist Press he had not seen the letter and would prefer not to comment.

Tolar acknowledged that one source of trustee frustration with Dilday was a perception he was "not providing the leadership" to force changes in the music school.

Some trustees, Tolar said, want "to train new musicians to do more of the modern-type of praise songs ... instead of the more traditional, what our trustees call 'high church' type of music."

-30-

Endowed chair at Southeastern
to honor evangelist Bailey Smith

By R.G. Puckett

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary have established the Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism with a pledge of \$1 million from a Gastonia, N.C., couple who wish to remain anonymous.

Trustees, meeting March 14-15 on the seminary's campus in Wake Forest, N.C., also approved curriculum changes recommended from the faculty and set in motion a process to develop an undergraduate program of studies.

Trustee chairman Ned Mathews, pastor of Gastonia's Parkwood Baptist Church, read from a letter addressed to seminary President Paige Patterson which outlined the details of the commitment from the couple whom Mathews called "Randy and Cathy."

The couple, members of the Parkwood church, indicated they will give \$200,000 annually for five years to endow the chair of evangelism. In the letter, they asked Patterson to "please continue to keep the school solidly on the inerrant word of God" and expressed confidence that under Patterson the school would always emphasize "the priority of winning souls to Christ."

Smith, a full-time evangelist, is a former Southern Baptist Convention president and former pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla.

Patterson said the gift was the first toward a goal of 10 million-dollar gifts to endow professorial chairs at the seminary. He said he hopes to have four more in place by the time the Southern Baptist Convention meets in Orlando, Fla., June 14-16.

Along with the announcement of the designated gift, Patterson reported that funds to the seminary from the Cooperative Program unified budget will be reduced \$331,000 this year. The CP funding formula for seminaries is

enrollment driven, based on the number of full-time equivalent students on a three-year rolling average.

Enrollment at Southeastern plummeted in the late 1980s following the resignations of the president and numerous faculty and staff after fundamental-conservative trustees attained control of the school. The presidents of the other five SBC-sponsored seminaries agreed to freeze the funding formula temporarily to allow Southeastern to recover from the setback.

Enrollment is reportedly rising in non-duplicating head count, but full-time equivalent enrollment continues to be soft.

Patterson described curriculum changes approved by trustees as "a step back to a classical theological curriculum with 18 wheels. ... By that I mean it is not simply there. It is designed to roll."

Greater emphasis will be placed on giving students a practical knowledge of New Testament Greek and Old Testament Hebrew, evangelism, missions and church planting, said Patterson.

In the present curriculum, about one third of the courses are required, with the students electing the remaining two thirds. In the new system, that division will be reversed, with required courses making up two thirds of the course work in a degree program.

More money will be required to implement the plan, Patterson said, to increase the size of the faculty to meet the increased classroom requirements.

The endowed chairs are one way to obtain additional funding. Past administrations at Southeastern have shied away from endowed teaching chairs for philosophical and ideological reasons, Patterson said.

"I believe the reasons for doing it are greater than the reasons for not doing it," he said.

Trustees also approved the formation of a study committee to report in the board's October meeting about the feasibility of offering undergraduate studies at Southeastern.

Patterson said, "What we envision is a curriculum which would offer up to 70 hours toward the completion of a B.A. degree in biblical and theological studies. Students will complete the history, math and science courses normally required for an undergraduate degree at an accredited institution. Then they could finish their junior and senior years in a program of study designed to prepare them for the intensity of theological study at the graduate level."

Of the six SBC seminaries, only New Orleans is currently offering undergraduate studies. The program there is considered successful, with several hundred enrolled. The New Orleans program is limited to those who are 27 years of age or older.

In other matters, Patterson reported that the recent visit by representatives of the Association of Theological Schools indicated there is hope for continued accreditation.

"Perhaps it would be enough for me to simply say to you that I am very enthusiastic about the whole interview process as it was conducted and as it was concluded," Patterson told the trustees.

"I have every reason to believe and hope the future will be quite bright."

In December, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools voted to restore the seminary's accreditation after more than two years on probation to correct various problems.

At the end of the president's message, trustees gave Patterson and Russ Bush, vice president for academic affairs, a standing ovation.

Patterson expressed his appreciation to the trustees but said his

accomplishments would not have been possible without the "unselfish efforts of the administration, faculty and staff."

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-- Information for this article was obtained from Southeastern Seminary and an article in the Wake Weekly by Jeff Alford.

North Carolina chapter
of Fellowship organized

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- "Free and faithful Baptist churches are being driven to rethink issues that they never considered before, including how the church should be governed and what its mission is," Cecil Sherman told the organizational meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina March 11-12.

Sherman, coordinator of the national Fellowship, told the gathering in Winston-Salem that "local congregations are alive again, making substantive decisions again for themselves."

"We are being driven to do some things that we would not have done otherwise," the former pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville observed.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the current leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies. Rather than opposing the SBC's new leaders, the organization is establishing its own alternative ministries.

"No longer should we cry, 'Ain't it awful!'" Sherman said. "Good things are happening."

More than 750 attended the two-day session, according to Winston-Salem pastor Richard Groves. Observers said that an even larger attendance would have been registered if it had not been necessary to reschedule the meeting from a February date because of ice and snow.

David Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church of Winston-Salem, was elected moderator; Cathy Hartsell, a member of St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte, was named moderator-elect; and Michael Tutterow, pastor of Mars Hill Baptist Church in Mars Hill, was approved as recorder and secretary-treasurer. A 16-member council also was elected.

The Friday evening session focused on missions and featured missionaries Paul Thibodeaux and Harlan Spurgeon as speakers.

Thibodeaux is a Fellowship missionary headed to Germany. He and his wife were missionaries of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, serving with the European Baptist Federation until 1992.

In his theme interpretation titled "Stop the Crying and Rock the Baby," Thibodeaux addressed the difficulties with the SBC and then called for those present to meet the challenge of a new opportunity in Baptist life.

In an allusion to the changes in the SBC, he said, "The funeral was difficult. Death had not come easy." In an apparent reference to the new course charted by moderate Baptists, he said, "Is it not time to stop the crying ... and rock the baby? Perceive the vision. Bury the past. Understand the moment. Glimpse the horizon."

Spurgeon serves as associate missions coordinator for the national Fellowship. A former missions administrator for the Foreign Mission Board, he resigned in the wake of trustee-imposed changes at the agency.

"These are confusing days, and the SBC has changed," he said. "But God has given us a new view of the world of missions as we go into tough places. ... God's up to something big in this new day for missions."

Linda McKinnish Bridges, a professor at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.), a new moderate seminary, also used the analogy of birth to discuss the changing face of theological education.

Referring to new alternative seminaries and divinity schools "about to be born and those born only a few hours," she asked, "Will our students know God better?"

"If we can say 'yes'... I think we have something to offer the church of the 21st century," she replied. "If we have to say 'no,' our efforts will remain powerless, fully formed perhaps but empty. ..."

"With a renewed commitment to theological education for Baptists, may we all respond with a 'yes.'"

In other matters, the North Carolina Fellowship approved a charter and bylaws and received an offering of \$4,000 to cover the expenses of the meeting.

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-- By R. G. Puckett of the Biblical Recorder, with information from the Winston-Salem Journal.

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CLARIFICATION: In the March 15 story "Workshops explore Bible...", please insert the following after the 23rd paragraph:

In a clarification issued after the conference, Marshall said the three reasons she cited are illustrations of feminist thinking and do not represent her opinion. The Bible and Christian tradition have "ample resources to answer these criticisms," she said, adding the atonement "is at the heart of our confession."

NOTE: A complete copy of Marshall's one-page clarification is available from ABP.

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CORRECTION: In the March 10 ABP story titled "Southwestern Seminary joins list...", the first sentence in the 13th paragraph should read: "Executive Committee (1992): Harold Bennett retired after 13 years as president of the SBC Executive Committee." Another reference in that paragraph describes his successor, Morris Chapman, as an inerrantist president in the 1980s. Chapman actually served as SBC president 1990-92.

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Christians must channel care into commitment, experts say

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Christians can -- and must -- channel their cares into commitments, experts on contemporary social issues urged during the Baptist Center for Ethics' spring seminar.

"Turning Broken Hearts Into Helping Hands" was the theme for the

seminar, which attracted about 175 people to Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., March 14-15.

"Our objective was to provide inspiring and practical handles for how Christians could transform their compassionate concerns into concrete actions," said Robert Parham, the center's executive director.

Seminar speakers were asked to define a range of issues and describe how Christians can respond, Parham said.

Domestic violence is a major national problem, claimed Reba Sloan Cobb, executive director for the Center for Women and Families in Louisville.

"The American Medical Association reports battery by males is the most serious form of injury to women in the United States," Cobb said. "The most dangerous place for women in America is her home. The most dangerous person to a woman is a person she knows and loves."

Four million American women will be battered by their male partners this year, and between 2,000 and 3,000 of them will be killed, she reported. In Kentucky last year, domestic violence produced a homicide every five days.

"Traditionally, the religious community has responded to domestic violence with silence -- silence of complicity," she charged. But churches must confront the problem by challenging the theological presupposition that women are subordinate to men and by re-examining Scripture interpretations of violence, divorce and anger, she said.

Churches can help victims by setting up task forces to study the problem, helping abused women and children gain access to abuse centers, raising awareness of domestic violence, providing literature on the issue and establishing peer-support groups, Cobb urged.

Church people also can volunteer to work at local domestic-abuse centers, contribute to the financial support of victims, advocate laws to prevent abuse and open their homes as "safe houses" for abused women and children, she said.

Another group of people who need help are families of prisoners, said Mary Friskics-Warren, director of Reconciliation Ministries in Nashville.

But she warned against several pitfalls of ministry to them. For example, helpers can become too task-oriented, focusing on the job of providing help without praying for and really caring about the people they are helping.

Helpers also are prone to create an over-under situation, with the person being helped dependent on the helper. Such a situation weakens, rather than empowers, the person, she said.

And sometimes helpers remain too distant from the people being helped, she stressed. The helpers give their money but fail to get to know the other people personally and "fail to see the image of God in those people."

To avoid those pitfalls, Friskics-Warren called on churches to work with broken hearts. "It is our common brokenness out of which we go to others," she said. "We also yearn for healing, and it's only in the healing that we have our brokenness put back together."

She urged pastors to preach on the church's own brokenness as it relates to the needs of others, promising that people who minister this way will receive more healing than they offer.

William Sloan Coffin honed in on global brokenness as he examined whether the United States should intervene in the affairs of other countries.

Coffin, a visiting professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, former pastor and university chaplain and longtime peace activist, said the international community has a responsibility for human rights that takes

precedence over national sovereignty.

But the U.S. experience in Vietnam produced a "new kind of isolationism," he added. Faced with possible military casualties, Americans say, "'Bring our boys home,' even when that means continued clan warfare and genocide," he insisted.

The question of international intervention produces dilemmas, he said, offering an analysis of the globe's three major intervention questions.

Bosnia's civil war dates at least to World War II. "The Croats were behaving so cruelly to the Serbs even the Nazis were shocked," he said.

"Any emancipatory intervention would have required a willingness to commit supplies and resources for a long period of time. ... Some intervention might have worked at the very beginning of the recent crisis."

But the United States didn't want to intervene, for fear of hurting Boris Yeltsin, whose Russian constituency favors the Serbs.

Somalia's intervention originally was a humanitarian venture, which turned military, he said. That's because the crisis was not a natural disaster, but a political conflict, which turned when fighting broke out between United Nations forces and Somali warlords.

The only way intervention will succeed in Somalia would be if the U.N. would recolonize the area until a provisional government can function, he said.

And Haiti's civil war could have been resolved by an early, limited intervention, he said, noting the United States lacked the resolve to act.

To prevent the need for future intervention, the nuclear nations must act to disarm themselves and others, he said. "The whole planet must become nuclear-free, or the planet becomes a nuclear porcupine."

People of goodwill also must work to protect the environment and "narrow the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor," Coffin urged. "No one makes a bigger mistake than those who do nothing because they can do little."

The media can help by enabling people to set priorities, said Sandra Roberts, editorial editor for The Tennessean, Nashville's morning newspaper.

"Journalists need to point out the vast array of options we have today" for resolving world problems, she said.

When deciding about editorials on foreign intervention, The Tennessean's editorial board asks four primary questions, Roberts said: What chance does intervention have of working? What is the United States' interest in this conflict? What will it cost? And are U.S. lives at stake?

Beyond these, the board asks, "Is this the right thing to do?" she said. "If there's a moral imperative, you can throw the other questions out the window."

The next generation might not recognize moral imperatives if they are not taught in public schools, insisted Charles Haynes, executive director of the First Liberty Institute at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

Citing increased alarm over assault, robbery, rape, suicide, pregnancy, and alcohol and drug abuse among school students, Haynes said the moral breakdown of the young generation threatens the nation.

"The primary task of teaching moral education lies with our families," he said. "Moral and spiritual breakdown has to do with the breakdown of families and faith ... and the irresponsible behavior of the media. It's a shared responsibility, and schools play a part."

America is engaged in a debate over whether schools can and should teach moral values, Haynes acknowledged. But he claimed moral teaching has been a historical part of public education.

Schools should teach "character education," he said, noting that

phrase is not as volatile as "values education" and more clearly focuses on the task -- developing character in young people.

Schools ought to teach civic virtue, a trait that can be adopted by all segments of society, he insisted. "We want to graduate people who know what it is to be a good citizen, to work for the common good."

Schools also should teach the "core moral ideals" of honesty, compassion and courage, which can be done without invoking religious authority, he said.

However, schools are well within their constitutional bounds when teaching that "many people look to religious authority" as a guide to moral behavior, Haynes added. Public schools can teach about religion without endorsing a particular religion, and this is constitutional, he added.

The most difficult area of moral values involves beliefs about sex, AIDS and abortion, he said. "If schools tackle these, it must be done fairly."

The local community must be allowed to decide a consensus on these issues, he added, noting, "When you talk about divisive social issues with kids, a variety of perspectives must be presented, including religious perspectives, which have a place."

Stressing the importance of teaching about religion in schools, Haynes said: "Character education is hollow when religion is not part of the information. A complete education must include education about religion where appropriate in the curriculum. ... It helps to create the school culture where character education can take place."

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America needs more fathers,
fewer prisons, speaker says

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- America would need fewer prisons if it had more fathers, family sociologist David Blankenhorn said during a Baptist Center for Ethics focus on fatherhood.

"We're building more and more prisons because we're asking prisons to do what fathers traditionally have done, especially with boys -- keep them on the straight and narrow," said Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values in New York. "But what the father does with children is hard to replace with prisons and social workers."

Blankenhorn helped spotlight fatherhood in a session of the Baptist Center for Ethics' spring seminar March 14-15 in Nashville, Tenn.

"We are living in an increasingly fatherless society," he warned. "Tonight, 36 percent of all American children are going to bed in homes where the fathers don't live. Before they reach age 18, half of them will live without their fathers for significant periods."

"This is a historically-unprecedented massive separation of men from their offspring. The relationship of guys and kids is weak and getting weaker," Blankenhorn said.

Divorce provides one cause of the problem, he said, noting 90 percent of divorced fathers "drift away from their children" and fail to supply significant involvement with their children.

The "new face of fatherlessness -- never-married fathers" also fuels the crisis, Blankenhorn added.

"Thirty-three percent of all American children are born outside of marriage," he explained. "We're talking about guys whose children would not

recognize them if they saw them on the street. That's how fatherless these children are."

Noting many sociologists are claiming fathers are not essential, he warned: "We're losing the idea of fatherhood. It's the second death of fatherhood -- not merely the absence of the father from the home, but the very idea of fatherhood."

Absentee fatherhood is more difficult on children than death of a father, he stressed. "If the father dies, the mother and others keep his moral presence alive for his children." But with divorce, the children feel guilty for the departure and feel they are unlovable, he said.

Despite the changing views of the sociologists and other critics of the nuclear family, a father's contributions to his children are unique and irreplaceable, Blankenhorn claimed.

"Fathers are not second parents or assistant mothers," he said. "Fathers give shape and character to their children in ways that cannot be replaced."

For example, while mothers usually are soothing and gentle with infants, fathers are more playful and provide rough-and-tumble activity that physically stimulates the child, he said.

In addition, the father is the "first other" -- the first person beyond the mother -- that the child knows, he reported, insisting, "Children who have good relationships with their fathers are more comfortable and less shy with others."

The absence of fatherhood produces severe social problems, such as "14-year-old boys with guns and 14-year-old girls with babies," he said. "It's kind of a trend."

The absence of a father is the most significant factor in young males' criminal activity -- beyond race, social or economic status, and education, Blankenhorn stressed, adding it's also a factor in girls' teen pregnancies.

Unfortunately, the churches are not doing much to solve the crisis, he admitted. "Churches are letting the problem be defined by the secular culture. Churches ought to take this a lot more seriously than they are" and provide more help for marital preparation and enrichment, as well as lessons on responsibility, to keep marriages intact.

That theme echoed through a presentation by Don Garner, chairman of the religion department at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn.

"Can the church offer a Dad's University to teach and model fatherhood?" Garner asked.

The concept of fatherhood is a biblical one, and should be handled by the church, he said.

"Fatherlessness is a key point in Scripture," he added, noting the Bible's teachings pay particular attention to the care for widows and orphans.

The biblical model of fatherhood stresses that fathers are to be good economic fathers for their children, he said. But the Bible also shows fathers are to be emotional providers, "an even more important" role.

"How are we equipped today to deal with the role of the emotional provider?" Garner asked. "There are absentee workaholic fathers among us who need to learn how to provide emotional nurture."

This fact was demonstrated by his own 5-year-old child, who came up to him as he was grading papers and said, "Dad, I hope you retire before I grow up, so we can have some time together."

Churches should help fathers provide emotional nurture by enabling them to evaluate success and their own priorities, he said. With capable fathers, families should be places "to find love, belong and be one's best self."

Of course, all fathers need help, he admitted. "None of us is a perfect father. None of us had a perfect father." But God can redeem every situation, even between fathers and children, he promised.

-30-

Fathers play many roles,
seminar speaker says

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- What's a dad to do?

"Genuine fathers play many parts" in raising their children, seminary professor Ray Higgins told participants at the Baptist Center for Ethics' spring seminar March 14-15 in Nashville, Tenn.

Higgins, assistant professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, helped shine a spotlight on fatherhood during one session of the meeting.

Using a countdown presentation, Higgins described the Top Ten roles dads play with their kids:

10. Friend. "Children need friendly fathers, who accept them as they are, enjoy being with them and understand them," he said.

Fathers who fail to provide friendliness and warmth harm their children he added. "Absentee fathers destroy their children at the soul level. They can't conceive of God as father."

But fathers should be careful not to cross the line and become their children's "pal," he cautioned. "Children and fathers never are equals. When kids think of their dad in terms of buddy or pal, it weakens the dad's other roles."

9. Coach. "Children need playful dads, who enjoy life, prepare them for challenges and teach them how to compete," Higgins insisted.

However, some fathers relate to their children only through sports, he said. This narrows the dimensions of their relationships and can inadvertently tell children they are "losers" if they're not successful in sports.

8. Protector. "Children need protection; they need help in anticipating dangers before they encounter them," he said.

Children whose parents do not appropriately protect them wind up "hurt, scared of the world, unable to believe in a loving God," Higgins said. But he urged fathers not to over-protect their children and fail to help them gain experiences in the real world.

7. Disciplinarian. "Children need boundaries," he noted, adding that dads must steer clear of two extremes -- dumping all the discipline chores on the mother or relating to children only as the disciplinarian.

"The wise father isn't too strict, nor too lenient," he said. "He isn't too tight with boundaries, but he's not afraid to set boundaries. The wise father knows how to raise better, not bitter, children."

6. Teacher. Fathers need to raise children in the "training and nature of the Lord," Higgins reminded. "The most powerful way fathers teach children is through who they are."

That can be positive or negative, depending on the kind of role model the father provides, he said.

5. Caregiver. Modern fathers' increasing role as caregivers is illustrated by their presence in hospital labor-and-delivery rooms and their greater involvement in the daily lives of their children, he observed.

And although this role has been seen by some people as "anti-masculine," it presents children with a model of compassion and concern, he said.

4. Provider. Although physical provisions are important, they are not exclusive, Higgins said. "Many fathers have been too narrow in their view of what it means to be a provider," he stressed. "We focus on bringing home the bacon, but not on bringing up the kids. ... The truth is, kids need our presence more than they need our presents.

"Every child needs a father's blessing. Our children can make it without luxuries, but not without a father's blessing."

3. Mate. The relationship between mom and dad is important to children, Higgins reported, adding that the distinctions between the two also are important.

"Our children mean something different when they say 'dad' than when they say 'mom.' And they need both," he said.

2. Leader. Children need direction, and their father can and should supply much of it, Higgins said.

A father who leads his children well teaches them to "take healthy risks, dream dreams ... and direct their lives through complex issues with balance," he explained.

1. Christian. Fathers must give attention to "spiritual needs" and help children develop a relationship to God through Christ, he said.

But Christian dads should avoid two temptations, he urged. They should not "make (children) become Christians on our timetable," but they also must not remain uninvolved with their children's spiritual concerns.

"Children need fathers who talk to them about God," Higgins stressed. "We must make our faith a way of life in the family. None of us is perfect, but for the sake of our children, we've got to give it our best shot."

-30-

'Sins' of ministry
outlined by Killinger

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE (ABP) -- Three "sins" continually plague ministers and teachers of religion, John Killinger told participants at the Baptist Center for Ethics' spring seminar March 14-15 in Nashville.

They are beset by failing to "see," setting wrong priorities, and losing hope and courage, said Killinger, professor of religion and culture at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

"So much hinges on seeing, and we are prone to darkness," said Killinger, a former pastor. He quoted an eye surgeon who told him many people "actually resist surgery ... that will make them (see) better." That's because people "have all of the world they can handle the way it is, and don't want to be made more receptive."

Unfortunately, non-seeing is a vocational hazard for ministers, Killinger conceded: "Life becomes habit, and seeing becomes restricted. Even in the church. Even among ministers and teachers. We learn the motions, and then go through them. Thoughtlessly. Routinely. Insensitively."

It's also an old hazard that affected Jesus' disciples, he said, noting they "were blind to the real immensity of what was happening around them."

Recalling the story of when Jesus had to touch a blind man twice

before sight was restored, he claimed hope in Jesus' abiding presence. "Thank God for those extra touches, for the fact that he doesn't abandon us in our stupidity, any more than he abandoned the disciples in theirs."

Turning to the sin of "screwing up the priorities," Killinger warned against the institutional "downpull" of the ministry.

"We never mean to become insensitive to human problems in the carrying out of our duties. It just happens," he said. "We start out with good intentions. We think we love everybody the way Christ loved us. We are even eager to lay down our lives for others. But somewhere along the way, the center of gravity shifts. It moves without our even being aware of it."

Churches tend to begin as movements and become institutions, he said. Along the way, their focus shifts from the cause for which they started to self-preservation. That change can cripple priorities, he stressed.

"Institutions have to be too careful," he explained. "It is hard to be a Christian in an institution. There are too many things to think about. Life is too complicated. Someone can always think of a reason why not."

The answer lies in focusing on the radical love of Jesus, which never failed to remain "part of a movement," not an institution, he said.

Discussing the sin of losing hope and courage, Killinger said the problem is simple: "Most of us live on the wrong side of Easter."

He cited a poll that revealed less than 10 percent of ministers are completely happy in their professional roles.

"We're living in the crucifixion mode, aren't we?" he asked. "Confused, buffeted, defeated. Lost our hope and courage. Don't know where to go from here. Lost, broken, spiritless. The wrong side of the resurrection."

As a cure, ministers must return to "the experience of the burning heart, the sense of a resurrection presence that can visit us," he urged. "That is what lies at the center of our existence. That is what defines our hopes and ambitions. That is what fires us with courage."

-30-

Suspicion divides clergy,
journalists, study reveals

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Clergy and journalists distrust, sometimes even fear, one another, according to a recent study.

The nine-month study, commissioned by The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, was the broadest to date, drawing on nearly 1,000 clergy and journalists, as well as more than 50 interviews and analysis of previous research.

Religionists said they are inaccurately portrayed or ignored by the media, while journalists said that media bashing is a convenient excuse because clergy don't like societal changes reflected in stories.

The study, titled "Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media," indicated that the distrust stems from the fact that religious figures fear being misunderstood and misrepresented. Journalists also are afraid of making inadvertent mistakes that will incur religious wrath, the study said.

"The resulting apprehensions inhibit the free flow of information and only add to misunderstanding," the study says.

Among other findings:

-- Clergy said that news coverage of religion is biased, negative and

sensational. Journalists disagreed but said that often mistakes are made because of unfamiliarity with religion.

-- The average newsroom has more ignorance than bias toward religion. "Overt anti-religious sentiments are rare, but uninformed reporters are too often intellectually lazy about getting their facts straight when assigned to cover religion stories," the study said.

-- Newspapers and broadcasters, for the most part, do not take seriously religion coverage. For example, a community newspaper that provides extensive coverage of the high school football team may devote considerably less ink to religion. The study pointed out that over the course of a year far more people attend church than football games.

-- There are too few full-time religion reporters. For example, the Religion Newswriters Association has only about 200 members and fewer than 70 of them cover religion on a full-time basis.

-- Journalists are not largely irreligious despite a 1980 study to the contrary. Seventy-two percent of newspaper editors nationwide said religion is personally significant in their lives.

"The problem lies, rather, in a secular press reporting on a highly secularized society in which faith and beliefs are muted, privatized and extremely diverse," the study said.

-- Faith and fact are the source of conflict. Religionists want the media to inspire as well as report, but journalists want to keep stories factual and fair.

-- Journalists and clergy agree that the news media should be more aggressive in covering religious figures.

-- Television coverage of religion is often affected by time constraints and entertainment values.

The study also showed that disagreement between journalists and clergy is extreme on several issues, such as whether the media is a more powerful influence on society than religion. The two groups also vastly disagree on whether society benefits from reports of scandal and whether journalism presents a negative view of clergy and religion.

Conservative Protestants generally are the most dissatisfied with media coverage.

The report, written by John Dart of the Los Angeles Times and Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, also made recommendations for both journalists and religionists.

Journalists should take religion more seriously, increase journalistic resources and seek continuing education in the area of religion, the study said.

Clergy should learn what journalists consider newsworthy and try to communicate events that fit the definition. They should provide the media easy access, pursue more effective communications within the religious organization and help correct misinformation by writing or calling when a story is wrong.

-30-

Religion/media studies
suggest different findings

By Ashley Householder

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- How well does the secular media cover religion? That depends on whom you ask.

Two recent studies on religion coverage in the media yielded contrasting views. One study, conducted by The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, showed a healthy objectivity toward religion required by the profession.

The other survey, conducted by the Media Research Center, a Virginia-based watchdog group headed by conservative activist Brent Bozell, suggested a media bias against religion.

The Freedom Forum report found "that an anti-religious bias in the media is a myth," John Seigenthaler, chairman of The First Amendment Center, said in the report. "Journalists fail their readers because they don't know and won't find out, rather than because they are hostile to religion."

The Freedom Forum report, titled "Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media," concluded that often journalists and clergy largely misunderstand each other.

The report, written by Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, and John Dart, religion writer for the Los Angeles Times, is based on responses from 529 clergy, 266 members of the Associated Press Managing Editors organization, and 99 members of the Religious Newswriters Association.

The Media Research Center, on the other hand, enlisted 12 researchers to study nightly news shows from five networks, as well as morning news and magazine news shows. The study "confirms the concerns of the religion community: religion in general is just not a matter of interest to the media," Bozell said.

"There is a chasm separating the journalistic community from the church-going community," Bozell charged. This chasm, he said, is responsible for the media's failure to cover religion as a serious topic in 1993, the year of the study.

At the press conference in which the MRC study was released, Bozell said, "We never see the good things religious groups are doing, whether it's helping the homeless, the abused or homosexuals suffering from AIDS."

He recommended the media take several courses of action, such as hiring reporters who are religious.

The Freedom Forum study, however, said the faith of reporters is not the controlling factor in religion coverage. "Whether a person is Christian is not definitive," Allen said. "The news will be well reported if journalists "are professional, truthful and even-handed."

Allen found that journalists report news according to what they perceive is the real story, regardless of their faith. It is not a matter of religious conviction but of good journalism, he added.

Both Allen and Bozell responded to the findings of the 1980 Lichter-Rothman survey of journalists but with different conclusions.

The Lichter study included journalists at the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, the three major television networks and PBS.

Bozell said the Lichter findings parallel his organization's study. He noted 50 percent of journalists in the Lichter study did not believe in God and 86 percent rarely attended synagogue or church, making it hard for them to "reflect or understand the role of religion in America." The media should "spend more time learning about religious organizations so they can separate nonsense from truth," Bozell said.

Allen and Dart said the Lichter study "has been quoted and misquoted to characterize the overwhelming majority of U.S. journalists as irreligious people, thus allegedly explaining the biased reporting of religion."

The Freedom Forum study found that faith is "very important" in the lives of three-quarters of the religion newswriters and to 72 percent of editors.

As might be expected, the two studies prescribed different courses of action.

The Media Research Center study said the networks should hire religion reporters, refraining from sensationalizing stories about religious authorities, and end the "good-news-is-no-news" mentality. The solutions proposed by the MRC are too simplistic, Allen said.

The suggestions in The Freedom Forum report were directed at clergy as well as journalists.

It suggested the clergy provide the news media with easy access to their informed viewpoint, commit greater financial resources to an effective communications office within the institution, and take responsibility for correcting misinformation.

Dart and Allen conclude that clergy and journalists should reach an understanding. "Each can come to appreciate the service rendered by the other to those who must know about the world around them and to those who must have faith in a world to come."

-30-

Covering SBC struggle poses
challenge for secular media

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The struggle for control of the nation's largest Protestant denomination -- one of the major religion stories during the past decade and a half -- presented secular news organizations with complex challenges.

Secular reporters found themselves trying to make sense of a battle in which the combatants not only disagreed about what the fight was over, but what to call the factions vying for power in the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention.

The most conservative wing gained control of the SBC machinery and most recently exercised that power by dismissing Russell Dilday from his post as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

While not unanimous in their views, several journalists and communicators contacted by Associated Baptist Press gave secular news organizations high marks for fairness in their coverage of the SBC battles.

Most said the shortcomings in secular coverage resulted from a lack of understanding on the part of particular reporters, not from bias on the part of writers or their news organizations.

"I think the news organizations that have had full-time religion people working on this story have done a more than adequate job of covering it," said Stan Hastey, a former Washington bureau chief of Baptist Press who now heads the most progressive of the new organizations formed in the aftermath of the SBC's upheaval -- the Alliance of Baptists.

Hastey noted that the Religion Newswriters Association frequently scheduled its meetings in conjunction with the annual SBC meeting and often ranked the SBC controversy among its top stories.

"The quality of coverage, in my opinion, varied," Hastey said. "And it varied in direct proportion to the level of knowledge the particular reporter had about the SBC."

While coverage by some news organizations was "superficial," Hasteley said secular reporters generally demonstrated a commitment to fairness by seeking out both sides for comment in their stories.

Herb Hollinger, who now heads Baptist Press, the SBC news service, said the secular media generally took the SBC story seriously.

Hollinger said the media in regions of the country that are home to large concentrations of Southern Baptists "have given it a lot of space, and I think they have been fair."

Outside the South and Southwest, where Southern Baptists make up a significant slice of the population, Hollinger said news coverage tended to focus on "sensational" angles of a story rather than providing an in-depth look at issues.

David Anderson, who was religion writer at United Press International during most of the SBC conflict and now writes for Religious News Service, said that "on the whole" the wire services took the story seriously, "especially after they figured out what was going on."

Anderson agreed with Hollinger that coverage varied by region and that it was a bigger story in the South.

"Religion reporters from all over the country took it seriously," Anderson said, "but I'm not sure they could convince their editors that it was serious.

"With 15 million members, it was a national story, even with the perception of Southern Baptists being centered in the South."

Not everyone agrees that the secular media has been generally fair in its coverage of the SBC. Mark Coppenger, the SBC's vice president for denominational relations, believes the secular journalists exhibit a bias in favor of less conservative religious perspectives.

In every denomination, Coppenger said, there is a struggle between the more conservative and less conservative elements.

"The center of mass of the secular media favors the less conservative, or more progressive, element," he said.

Coppenger said "very few evangelical writers or religiously conservative religion writers" work at major newspapers.

The secular media is biased against those who would draw tough lines on issues such as abortion and homosexuality and favors those who would promote broader freedom, he said.

In the long-running SBC struggle, the question of what to call the competing sides remains in dispute. Labels used by Baptist and secular journalists included "fundamentalist," "conservative," "moderate," "liberal" and hyphenated combinations of these terms.

Coppenger urged the use of the terms "moderate" and "conservative," arguing that the words "liberal" and "fundamentalist" are pejorative.

Wilmer Fields, who formerly headed the SBC's public relations and press offices, told the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University that journalists could not be faulted for using the term "fundamentalist" to describe the victors in the SBC struggle.

"In journalism, as elsewhere, 'labels' for people should be the most accurate descriptive words available," Fields said. When people "believe, think and act like classic fundamentalists, they should not be surprised to be called fundamentalists."

Hollinger, while saying that he probably would agree with Fields that the prevailing side in the SBC struggle shares classic fundamentalism's view about the inerrancy of scripture and other issues, said he prefers other labels because today's readers do not understand the meaning of fundamentalism.

"I would prefer moderate Southern Baptist and conservative Southern

Baptist," Hollinger said. "I think that differentiates the two without using pejorative terms."

Hollinger gets support from Anderson on that point.

"Early on we used 'fundamentalist' and 'moderate' at UPI," he said. "In retrospect, I think that probably was not the best usage, not because it's not true, but because 'fundamentalist' has a pejorative connotation.

"At some point we moved to 'moderate' and 'conservative,' always trying to explain that moderates were conservative as well."

Hastey said he had applied the term 'fundamentalist' to the SBC's prevailing wing in the context of fundamentalism as a historical religious movement.

He noted that the "new establishment" in the SBC is "courting self-described independent fundamentalists" such as Jerry Falwell, who has described himself as less conservative than Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson, one of the architects of the SBC shift.

"If Jerry Falwell is a fundamentalist and proud of the term, why does Paige Patterson resist it so?" Hastey asked.

Hastey also noted that during a 1987 conference at Ridgecrest, N.C., some of the nation's leading inerrantist scholars told "the new rulers of the SBC that not only were they fundamentalists but extreme fundamentalists."

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