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In this issue:

- **Southwestern faculty must endorse amended 'Baptist Faith and Message'**
- **Rigidity stifles ministry, team-training consultant says**
- **New Testament scholar joining Wake Forest faculty**
- **Pat Cole named to staff of Baptist Center for Ethics**
- **Moyers receives award from Texas commission**

Southwestern faculty must endorse amended 'Baptist Faith and Message'

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Faculty members at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will be required to sign the updated "Baptist Faith and Message" statement and teach accordingly or sever their relationship with the seminary, President Ken Hemphill said.

"Southwestern is a confessional institution, and our charter and bylaws are clear and have been clear for decades," Hemphill said in a prepared statement.

Professors at the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, have long been required to sign a pledge to teach in accordance with the "Baptist Faith and Message," the official doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention.

This summer the convention revised the statement, however, adding an amendment on the family, which gained nationwide publicity because of its emphasis on a wife's submission to the authority of her husband. It was the first amendment to the statement since 1963, when the convention approved several revisions in the document first drafted in 1925.

While a faculty spokesman said the faculty is "overwhelmingly supportive" of the family amendment, some professors reportedly disagree with the new article's interpretation of what the Bible says about family relationships and do not believe it should be imposed on current faculty.

"As a matter of conviction and conscience, as an SBC institution, we gladly teach according and not contrary to the 'Baptist Faith and Message,'" Hemphill's statement said. "We are under the patronage, general direction, and control of the SBC which established the 'Baptist Faith and Message' and amended it in 1998."

According to the faculty manual, professors who can no longer subscribe to the seminary's articles of faith are expected to "voluntarily sever relations with the institution," Hemphill said.

"We are going to do the right thing in the right way," the president said.

Some faculty members said they object to adding the amendment to the seminary's articles of faith because it applies a particular interpretation to selected Bible verses while excluding other relevant passages.

Hemphill and the seminary faculty discussed the issue at a general faculty meeting in early October. Hemphill declined to comment on the meeting or the issue itself other than to issue his prepared statement.

David Porter, director of public relations for Southwestern, said no deadline has been set for faculty members to sign the statement.

However, one faculty member told a reporter the underlying message given to professors was "sign on or sign off." The primary objection of many faculty members, he said, is that the policy under which they were employed and granted tenure -- signing the 1963 statement -- has been changed. And he said it was implied that the new signing would mean that "we agree with anything passed in the future."

Another possible revision of the "Baptist Faith and Message" is already under study. The SBC Executive Committee in September passed on to the council of seminary presidents for study a proposal made in Salt Lake City to amend the faith statement's article on Scripture, adding the words "in every area of which it speaks." The change would make it read: "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, in every area of which it speaks, for its matter."

The faculty member said professors asked Hemphill for an independent analysis of whether it is legal to require them to sign the revised version.

Another faculty member agreed that the primary objection is having to sign the statement again, but he defended Hemphill and other administrators as simply having to carry out what the seminary charter states.

Despite objections by some professors, faculty spokesman James Spivey said it was not his understanding that the faculty would be forced to sign the revised document, but that it would be "entirely voluntary." He said faculty members were not told they would have to resign if they refused to sign it.

The faculty "is overwhelmingly supportive" of the family and the amendment, and the consensus is they are supportive of what the amendment is trying to communicate, said Spivey, vice chairman of the faculty council.

"But when you put something in a doctrinal statement, you want to make sure it is complete and inclusive of biblical doctrine and is a true consensus of what Southern Baptists believe," he said. "The fact that the Southern Baptist Convention passed it says it is a consensus."

Spivey said he did not believe the issue would become an "explosive controversy" at the seminary and praised the faculty and administration for "working dialogically" on the matter.

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Rigidity stifles ministry, team-training consultant says

By Robert O'Brien

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Christian organizations may be staffed by people called of God, but their leaders often fail to realize the value of what each individual can contribute.

That's especially true if those organizations operate on what team-training consultant John Brantley calls the "divine-insight" model.

"That model is individual- or personality-driven," said Brantley, a former Baptist pastor who has applied Christian principles to help many high-profile corporate clients increase productivity, efficiency and personal relationships.

The corporate world has evolved over the past 20 years from rigid, top-down management to more flexible and participatory approaches to meet changing times, but too many Christian groups have failed to understand the value of that, he said at a series of four seminars in Atlanta, Southeast Asia, Houston and Europe.

"The 'divine-insight' model operates on the 'God-speaks-to-me-and-I-have-the-right-answers' style of leadership," said Brantley, who heads JTB Communications in Danielsville, Ga., and teaches Sunday school at First Baptist Church in Athens, Ga.

"Too often, that model interprets 'spiritual authority' as rigid authoritarianism" -- a contradiction of the model of Jesus Christ's incarnation and willingness to die to self, he said.

"Rigid authoritarianism leads to a compliant or submissive organization that doesn't foster innovation," he said. "It causes an atmosphere of resentment and frustration, because people aren't encouraged to use the gifts God has given them unless it fits the leader's viewpoint."

But even more enlightened Christian organizations can put too much emphasis on the leadership and ideas of a few, Brantley warned.

Brantley has spanned the globe in recent months to train the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's global missions personnel to practice the "cooperative-culture model" -- the art of working as flexible, creative teams in a missions environment that operates without on-the-field administrators and with little organizational overhead.

The cooperative-culture model "is process driven and built on the premise that all are created by God and called by him to serve," Brantley said. "It respects the worth and value of everyone and of their creativity, ideas and participation. It leads to growth, maturity, personal accountability, and desire of employees to take responsibility for the success of the whole organization."

That model, when practiced correctly, has structure and doesn't permit everyone to always get her or his way, he said. But it gives freedom, in a team context, "to let creativity soar to the heights God intended, color outside the lines and even redraw the lines."

But it won't be easy.

Brantley -- and CBF global missions leaders -- stress that his strategies will work only if people commit themselves and remain committed to such concepts as: (1) dying to self, (2) speaking the truth in compassion, and (3) seeing others not as competitors but as co-ministers with interdependent, God-given talents and ideas.

The bottom line aims at allowing flexibility and creativity but also establishing an environment in which coworkers don't abuse those freedoms.

"If you want to minister as a group, you have to stay focused as a group," Brantley said. "To stay focused as a group you have to be equipped and motivated to discuss and resolve the problems as well as share the good things.

"Christians too often think that everything will be OK if you trust God and believe enough," Brantley said.

"I agree with that in theory," he said, "but in the real world even Christians need to be equipped to use Christian principles to create a predictable process where they can find the emotional and spiritual safety they need to spread their wings."

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New Testament scholar joining Wake Forest faculty

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- A woman New Testament scholar and a longtime Baptist agency head are joining the faculty of Wake Forest University's school of divinity, officials of the school in Winston-Salem, N.C., have announced.

Alexandra Brown has accepted a one-year appointment as visiting associate professor of biblical studies. She heads the religion department at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va.

"As a younger scholar, Alexandra Brown brings to the divinity school academic strength, theological commitment and feminist awareness," said Phyllis Tribble, associate dean and professor of biblical studies at the divinity school. "I am delighted that she will help us launch the first year of the school by teaching foundational courses in New Testament."

James Dunn announced earlier in October that he will step down from executive-director duties at the Baptist Joint Committee to become a visiting professor of Christianity and public policy at the school. Dunn will continue to work part time for the Washington-based religious-liberty coalition after he semi-retires on or before Sept. 1, 1999.

Divinity school Dean Bill Leonard said Dunn "is recognized inside and outside the Baptist community as one of the foremost analysts of church-state issues in the United States."

Brown and Dunn will join a new faculty that includes Tribble, who formerly taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City; Frank Tupper, a theologian formerly on the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and Samuel Weber, a Roman Catholic priest and Benedictine monk who is an expert on church history and spirituality.

The divinity school is scheduled to open next fall.

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-- By ABP staff

Pat Cole named to staff of Baptist Center for Ethics

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Baptist communicator Pat Cole has been named associate director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn., effective Nov. 2.

Cole, 40, has been partnership editions editor for Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptists' weekly newspaper, since 1996. At Western Recorder, Cole has managed the editing and production of five monthly Baptist newspapers. Western Recorder produces in partnership with other state Baptist conventions. Western Recorder has publishing partnerships with Baptist conventions in New England, Pennsylvania/South Jersey, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Utah-Idaho and Hawaii.

While at Western Recorder, he also helped create WR Communications, an arm of Western Recorder that provides marketing and communications services to church-related clients.

At BCE, Cole will direct the organization's communications and marketing efforts and will coordinate the production of congregational resources.

Prior to joining the Western Recorder staff, Cole served for nine years as director of news and information at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He also has been a reporter for the Elizabethton Star, a daily newspaper in his hometown of Elizabethton, Tenn.

Cole holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, a master's degree in marketing from Webster University in St. Louis and a master-of-divinity degree from Southern Seminary.

He has won numerous awards for writing and publication management from the Baptist Communicators Association, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education and the Bluegrass Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

"Pat brings a sturdy base of experience and much needed expertise to BCE that promise to quicken and broaden our mission of providing ethics resources and services to congregations," said Robert Parham, BCE's executive director.

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-- By ABP staff

Moyers receives award from Texas commission

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Broadcast journalist Bill Moyers received the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission's Distinguished Service Award at a recent luncheon in Dallas.

In presenting the award, CLC Director Phil Strickland praised Moyers for his commitment to religious liberty and the separation of church and state, based on his Baptist heritage.

Strickland also thanked Moyers for the "context of caring" out of which his life's work has been done and for demonstrating "the courage to go after truth and take the consequences."

Moyers in turn expressed his appreciation for the "steady, powerful witness" of the CLC and other Texas Baptists represented at the luncheon.

"From popular culture to politics, there is a general coarsening of society," Moyers said. "In a real sense, American society seems to be careening. The center is not holding. America is still very much up for grabs, and it needs now, more than ever, the kind of work you are doing."

Moyers grew up in Central Baptist Church of Marshall, Texas, and graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He went on to become deputy director of the Peace Corps, press secretary and special assistant to President Lyndon Johnson and an award-winning producer of documentaries and cultural analyst for PBS, CBS and NBC.

His documentaries for public broadcasting have included "God and Politics," "Healing of the Mind," "Amazing Grace" and "Genesis: A Living Conversation."

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