



# Associated Baptist Press

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### Former missions leader criticizes policy change

By Bob Allen

RICHARDSON, Texas (ABP) -- A new requirement that Southern Baptist missionaries affirm the "Baptist Faith and Message" signals a major shift in denominational priorities, charges former missions leader Keith Parks.

"It has never been clearer that the fundamentalist leaders have changed the very nature of the Southern Baptist Convention," Parks has written in an open letter to editors of selected Baptist state newspapers.

According to the SBC's charter, Parks said, the convention's purpose "is to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of Southern Baptists for the propagation of the gospel at home and abroad."

Of current SBC leaders, he contended: "Their highest priority is not missions. It is doctrinal conformity."

Parks, who served 1980-1992 as president of what was then called the Foreign Mission Board, has criticized policies of the agency before. Previously a missionary to Indonesia, he retired early as FMB president over philosophical differences with the board of trustees.

He went on to become coordinator of global missions for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which provides alternatives to official SBC programs. He held that job five years before retiring in 1999 at age 71.

Parks' letter comes in response to reports that current IMB President Jerry Rankin has asked all 5,100 missionaries to affirm the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the SBC in 2000.

That reverses an earlier policy that missionaries need not agree with every minor point of the statement as long as they agree to conduct their work within its parameters.

Parks said the new requirement is causing "an agonizing choice" for many missionaries. "It means they must either give up their historic Baptist convictions that 'we have no creed but the Bible' or they must give up their calling."

Long-term missionaries signed on with the IMB under different requirements, voluntarily expressing their beliefs without having to sign a "man-made creed," Parks said. "Their beliefs have not changed -- the rules have."

Parks said confessions of faith like the "Baptist Faith and Message" cease to be voluntary when people are forced to sign them.

Rankin was unavailable for comment Feb. 7. In his earlier letter to missionaries explaining the policy change, however, he said failure by trustees to enforce the "Baptist Faith and Message" a year ago had raised suspicions that some IMB personnel hold views outside the mainstream.

"While we believe this is unfounded, we do not need an issue such as this to generate needless controversy, erode support and distract us from the focus on our task at such a critical time of opportunity around the world," he wrote.

While Rankin advised missionaries that none of the recent changes to the document is major, other Baptists have criticized new language describing the role of women and the nature of the Bible.

An IMB spokesperson, however, said administrators expect most, if not all, current missionaries to comply. Regional leaders will counsel with any that object or have questions about the request.

Parks, who now lives in Richardson, Texas, told Associated Baptist Press he believed the IMB policy change marks a "pivotal event." He initially wrote his letter to the Baptist Standard, he said, because he chairs a subcommittee studying how Texas Baptists can be involved in missions, and "knew this had implications on our work."

At a friend's suggestion, he said he revised the letter to make it more general and sent it to other Baptist editors.

"Most Baptists assume they are supporting the same kind of missions they have historically supported," Parks said. "This is not true, and this action helps clarify that."

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## **Law firm appears ready to settle with BFA investors**

PHOENIX (ABP) -- A law firm that gave legal advice to the failed Baptist Foundation of Arizona appears ready to settle with investors who lost money in a 1999 bankruptcy.

The Arizona Republic reported Jan. 26 that an insurance carrier for the Phoenix-based firm Jennings, Strouss & Salmon had placed \$21 million in an escrow account for a possible settlement.

An attorney for a liquidation trust that took over the Foundation, however, told the newspaper there is no agreement and that the money was set aside in the event that a settlement is reached.

Even if the firm does settle, it will be only a small victory for 13,000 investors who are owed \$590 million in the largest bankruptcy involving a religious institution in history.

Investors, who have been told they will get back from 39 percent to 44 percent of their original investment after Foundation assets are liquidated, have so far received 8.5 percent.

They hope to recover more of their losses, however, in lawsuits pending against Arthur Andersen, the accounting firm that allegedly missed a Ponzi scheme in audits of the Phoenix-based Foundation.

In other recent developments:

-- The Arizona newspaper also reported details of new allegations in one lawsuit of "Enron-like" activities by Andersen in the Foundation case.

New allegations, filed Jan. 30 by lawyers for the BFA liquidating trust, claim the auditor altered documents, ignored warnings of wrongdoing from both inside and outside and collected large fees while issuing clean audits that victims say helped Foundation officers defraud them.

The former managing partner for Andersen's Phoenix office denied the new allegations, which are similar to charges related to the collapse of energy giant Enron, another Andersen client.

The liquidating trust is trying to prove punitive damages against Andersen in a trial scheduled March 4 in Maricopa County Superior Court.

-- The Republic reported in another issue that Arizona Attorney General Janet Napolitano would testify before Congress some time this month about similarities she alleges between the Foundation and Enron collapse.

"What they are trying to say is Enron is unique and it will not happen [again] and we will fix it," said Napolitano, a Democrat who is running for governor. "We know from the cases here that Enron really was not all that unique."

Napolitano earlier wrote Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., saying she believed Andersen had engaged in a pattern of deceptive practices in Arizona.

-- The Attorney General's office also for the first time recently publicly compared the Foundation failure to the collapse of Phoenix-based Lincoln Savings and Loan a decade ago.

An investigative report says that Jay Ozer, a former partner for Arthur Andersen, repeated errors in Foundation audits that he made while working on books of the largest bank failure in U.S. history.

Ozer, who retired in 2000, referred calls by the newspaper to his attorney, who denied his client and Andersen did anything wrong.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Longtime Baptist leader shares memories in book**

By Bob Allen

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (ABP) -- As a scholar, Duke McCall specialized in Old Testament studies, not Baptist history. But he has seen enough of the latter firsthand to qualify as an expert in both.

He attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the 1930s, studying under professor and president John R. Sampey. At 25, he became Sampey's pastor at the influential Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

At 28, he became president of the Baptist Bible Institute, later New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In his early 30s, he was executive secretary of the Executive Committee, a position he describes as the most powerful in the Southern Baptist Convention.

In 1951, at 37, he became president of Southern Seminary. Retiring in 1982, he served longer than any other president in the school's history. He capped off his career by serving as president of the Baptist World Alliance from 1980 to 1985.

"Few other people have had more influence over Baptists in the past century than McCall," said Walter Shurden, a historian at Mercer University and formerly served under McCall as Southern Seminary's dean of theology.

The span of that influence is related in McCall's own words in a new book, "Duke McCall: An Oral History," published by the Baptist History and Heritage Society in Brentwood, Tenn.

The book is co-authored by Ronald Tonks of Nashville, Tenn., who retired from the SBC Historical Commission in 1990. It is based on a series of interviews conducted over three years in the early 1980s. Some of the sessions were outdoors, and background noise made tape recordings hard to transcribe. McCall put the project on a back shelf until years later when he got a personal computer and edited the transcript himself. The book's preface is dated May 1, 2000.

In his preface, McCall makes it clear that his book is off-the-cuff memory. "Undoubtedly, I sometimes remember to advantage, and sometimes I misremember details," he writes. "The record, however, is an accurate report of my memory of the things we reviewed."

Among topics:

-- On the 1958 controversy between Southern Seminary faculty and the president that led to dismissal of 13 professors, McCall acknowledges mistakes on both sides.

"This was not a quarrel between demons and angels, with one side representing the angelic and the other the demonic," he writes. "It was a group of demon-possessed human beings who were doing utterly unbelievable things to one another, to the cause of Christ, to Southern Seminary, to students, and to other faculty members."

Of his general views on controversy, McCall reflects, "Controversy is sinful, and I think anyone involved in controversy has cause for repentance, regardless of how it began."

-- On the "Baptist Faith and Message," revised amid denominational controversy in 1963.

"We have moved farther toward accepting the 1963 document as a creed than we ever approached accepting the 1925 document as having creedal force."

McCall attributes that trend to "the evaporation of homogeneity" as Southern Baptists became more diverse, both theologically and geographically.

"Today, Southern Baptists have this kind of diversity, and the resulting mistrust of one another. Therefore, we have adopted the feeling that it is desirable to use the 'Baptist Faith and Message' to enforce some conformity and homogeneity among all these different points of view."

-- Of the SBC's conservative "revolution," McCall says it wasn't the first time people did things in denominational life for political reasons, but it was the first organized political effort to put people with a specific point of view in leadership. "This is not illegal," he says. "I think it's just not in accordance with the spirit of Christian brotherhood or the heritage of Southern Baptists."

McCall says for most of his career he was regarded as middle- or even right-of-center theologically. Virginia's Religious Herald newspaper once criticized him as "the leader of biblical fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention."

He more often found himself targeted from the right, however, going as far back as run-ins with fundamentalist leader J. Frank Norris in the 1940s. He says Norris was different from later SBC combatants in a significant way, however.

He relates a story about meeting Norris in a hotel. "He tried to embarrass me by announcing in his loud voice, which would penetrate the roar of the conversation in the hotel lobby, 'Hello, Duke, old friend. It's good to see you.' To which I responded, imitating his volume of voice as best I could, 'Hello, Dr. Norris, I've always wanted to meet you. I wanted to tell you that if you ever say anything nice about me in the 'Fundamentalist,' I'll sue you for libel.'"

The two shared a laugh, and McCall says he was never again mentioned in Norris' newspaper after the encounter.

"Combativeness and controversy was a game with him, in a sense," McCall says. If a target could respond without anger, he would turn his guns on someone else. "But there is no humor, no give and take in the present controversy. Stylistically, it's very different in its leadership."

Charles Deweese, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, said sales of the book are going well.

"I think there is major value in denominational leaders writing this kind of volume and letting it out," Deweese said. "Oral history gives to history a personal dimension that abstract writing can never do. It gives insights into the personal life of the leader that are quite different than anything you read anywhere else."

-- EDITOR'S NOTE: Information about ordering the book "Duke McCall: An Oral History" is available from the Baptist Heritage and History Society, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37024-0728; by phone, 800-966-2278; e-mail, [cdeweese@tnbaptist.org](mailto:cdeweese@tnbaptist.org); or the Internet, [www.baptisthistory.org](http://www.baptisthistory.org).

## **Children's ministers create Sunday school curriculum**

By Mark Wingfield

HOUSTON (ABP) -- Dissatisfied with curriculum choices available for children's Sunday school, a group of Texas Baptist children's ministers decided to publish their own.

It's not fancy, and it isn't produced in mass quantities, but churches using the material say it's filling a need.

"When we put the Faithway Bible study literature in the hands of our teachers, the quality of our Sunday school experience jumped several notches," said Wayne Gerhardt, associate pastor for childhood education at University Baptist Church in Houston. "Our teachers like it because they truly see and understand they are guiding the spiritual development of these children."

Gerhardt is among about a dozen children's ministers who collaborate on the curriculum, which began publication in August 2000.

Their primary concern was finding a children's curriculum that follows basic educational principles and is heavily Bible-based. Other products on the market, Gerhardt said, focus too much on "fun and games and silliness."

"This was borne out of a deep conviction that children need good Bible study experiences," he said. "The curriculum is a key to this."

The idea for the independent curriculum surfaced about two years ago, when a group of Texas Baptist children's ministers discovered common concerns about the curricula their churches were using.

They evaluated about 10 lines of literature produced by various agencies and ministries. All lacked to some degree in biblical content and adherence to educational principles, said Helen Waldrop, former minister to children at First Baptist Church of Arlington.

They hoped the Baptist General Convention of Texas, which at the time was beginning to publish a line of adult Bible study literature, might fill the void. But when they discovered that wasn't likely to happen soon, they determined to venture out on their own.

"Nobody wanted to do this," Gerhardt said. "Finally, someone said, 'Well, if we can't find it, we've got to write it.' So kicking and screaming, we reached that point."

The group meets regularly to plan and evaluate. Waldrop serves as editor, receiving and processing new units each month.

The literature is distributed on a month-to-month basis and has a short time span between writing and publication. Usually, Waldrop distributes the pieces two to three weeks before the intended month of use.

To cut costs, each subscribing church receives a master copy of all the pages and is responsible for duplicating those pages for teachers and students.

The price is \$50 per church per month.

It is, by all accounts, a shoestring operation.

"This is publishing without any money," Gerhardt explained. "We write for free. Everybody gives what they can in the way of time and effort."

The pieces are differentiated in three age levels -- first and second grade, third and fourth grade, and fifth and sixth grade. The Faithway curriculum does not include preschool lessons.

Most all the writers are Texas Baptist church staff members, Waldrop said. Many are veteran children's ministers who have written for other publishers in the past.

The group's mission statement says they will produce "a Bible-based Christian curriculum for children that is foundational to faith development, focusing on sequential, age-appropriate Bible-learning experiences."

So far, about 30 churches are using the Faithway literature, Waldrop said.

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-- EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information, contact Waldrop at (817) 274-2268; [helenwaldrop@msn.com](mailto:helenwaldrop@msn.com); or 409 Dorcas, Arlington 76013.

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