



Texas Baptists Committed

October 1997

Vote for These BGCT Leaders: Dilday, McFarland and Hogan

Russell H. Dilday, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Jaclanel McFarland, a laywoman from South Main Baptist Church, Houston; and Ed Hogan, pastor of Jersey Village Church, Houston; will be nominated as officers of the Baptist General convention of Texas at the annual convention in Austin, November 10-11, 1997.

RUSSELL H. DILDAY: nominee for president

By Marv Knox, Associate Editor, Baptist Standard

Russell H. Dilday, former president of Southwestern Seminary, will be nominated for president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Dilday will be nominated by Hardin-Simmons University Chancellor Jesse Fletcher.

Dilday was a political lightning rod among Texas Baptists in 1994, when Southwestern Seminary trustees fired him in one of the climactic chapters in the ultra-conservative domination of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dilday, 66, now teaches at Baylor University's George W. Truett Seminary in Waco. Fletcher and Dilday have been friends since the 1950s when they were fellow students at Southwestern Seminary.

"I came to know his heart and life and got to admire him," Fletcher recalled. That admiration grew through the

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JACLANEL McFARLAND: nominee for first vice president

By Marv Knox, Associate Editor, Baptist Standard

Jaclanel Moore McFarland, a Baylor University regent and member of South Main Church in Houston, will be nominated for first vice president of the BGCT by former BGCT President Phil Lineberger.

McFarland has made impressive contributions to the BGCT Executive Board and the convention's special Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee, noted Lineberger, pastor of Williams Trace Church in Sugar Land, who has served with McFarland on those groups.

"Jaclanel McFarland is one of the impressive young leaders in Baptist life," Lineberger said. "She has a good grasp of the Christian faith and Baptist principles. She is a leader and very committed to what Texas Baptists are doing in

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ED HOGAN: nominee for second vice president

By Marv Knox, Associate Editor, Baptist Standard

Ed Hogan, pastor of Jersey Village Baptist Church in Houston, will be nominated for second vice president at the annual convention by Daniel Rivera, dean of instruction at Hispanic Seminary, San Antonio.

Hogan, 37, was pastor of First Church in Crockett, 1992-97, and First Church in Groom, 1989-92.

"I have two sons-in-law in pastorates in Houston," Rivera said, "and I believe it is time to target young pastors in the state for leadership positions. They need to be seen and heard. They bring a fresh and relevant ministry perspective. I think the timing is right to elect a contemporary pastor to represent the views of these dynamic young men."

Hogan said he has always appreciated the "breadth and depth" of the work of the BGCT and that his work on the

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CO-CHAIR THOUGHTS FROM JEROLD McBRIDE

My Grief is Turning to Joy!

In the 16th chapter of John, Jesus spoke to His disciples regarding his impending death and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He told the disciples, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."

I have grieved deeply about the Southern Baptist Convention turning away from an emphasis on grace and missions and from the SBC rejecting our historic principles and practices for the foolishness of fundamentalism. It has at times been a grief nearly too much to bear.

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by Jerold McBride

Dilday nomination, from page 1...

decades, as Dilday was a pastor of churches in Texas and Georgia, a leader in denominational life and president of the world's largest seminary," Fletcher added.

Dilday explained he agreed to accept the nomination because he is a "debtor to Texas and Texas Baptists."

"I owe a lot to the culture where I grew up," he said. "The open, pioneer spirit and rugged individualism have shaped and formed my life, and I have a deep appreciation for Texas.

"My whole life has points of contact with Baptists in Texas. Along with my parents, Baptists here in this state led me to faith in the Lord. I was baptized in a Texas Baptist church, and a Texas Baptist church ordained and called me to the ministry. I went to Baptist schools here and met my wife at Baylor University.

"The shaping of my life has been vitally linked up with Baptist Texans."

His father, Hooper Dilday, served on the BGCT staff for 20 years.

If elected, Dilday would work toward **two major goals**, he said.

"**First**, I would hope that we could emphasize the importance of being **Baptist Christians** in the sense that we can be grateful for that heritage," he said. "The Baptist approach is unique and valuable and needs to be preserved."

Dilday cited a litany of characteristics and values that shape and define the meaning of "Baptist Christian." They included the lordship of Christ, the authority of scripture, the importance of the local congregation, the vitality of cooperation as a way of doing missions, freedom of conscience, religious liberty, separation of church and state, evangelism and missions "as the primary responsibility we have in the world."

Second, Dilday would emphasize "that we need to be **Christian Baptists**," he said. "Sometimes we forget to reflect the Spirit of Jesus, to show in our lives the Christlike qualities of kindness and goodness and love.

"We've come through a time when Baptists have lost a lot of credibility in the public eye. Life under that name has been ridiculed because a lot of us have forgotten that we need to carry out our lives in a reflection of our Lord."

Dilday noted he looks forward to Texas Baptists' future.

The proposals recently presented by the BGCT's special Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee "come at a timely period at the turn of a new century," he said. "We can see that by maintaining all that is good in Texas Baptist life and developing new strategies, we can move ahead in the next century."

Dilday also affirmed his support for the BGCT staff. "It's time we rallied behind them and thank the Lord for these people who labor with us," he said.

And he also stressed the need to "spotlight the importance of the local church" in the life of the denomination. "That's always been one of my favorite concepts in Baptist life—the

autonomy or importance of the local church for beginning to carry out the Great Commission," he said. "The churches do not exist to support the denomination, but the denomination exists to help the churches do their work."

Dilday also is a product of Baptist schools, Fletcher noted. He is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary, where he earned both master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees.

Dilday is "an outstanding candidate," Fletcher maintained. "He has a proven leadership record. He's one of us; he knows Texas Baptists."

Grief to Joy, from page 1...

My life, and the life of my father, was deeply invested in Southern Baptists. My father spent twenty-five years as a pastor of Southern Baptist churches and thirteen years with the Annuity Board. I graduated from Hardin-Simmons and earned the Masters and Doctorate degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. I served in the Oklahoma Baptist Convention as Director of Evangelism. I was a teaching fellow in evangelism at Southwestern. I served on several committees in Southern Baptist life.

The takeover of the SBC by fundamentalists has caused some to rejoice while it has caused me to grieve.

But my grief is turning to joy as I see and participate in what Texas Baptists are doing to build the Kingdom of God!

Texas Baptists are "taking lemons and making lemonade." They are responding to the crisis in Baptist credibility with courage and vision. They are moving forward out of the darkness to a bright new day. The Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee Report is another step into the Light of God.

I experience joy as I watch Texas Baptists respond to the crisis in theological education and form new seminaries and a Bible College to prepare our next generation of students.

I experience joy as I see Texas Baptists respect local church autonomy and treat all churches fairly in their mission giving.

I experience joy as I see Texas Baptists developing strategies to start more churches, reach various ethnic groups with the Gospel, and launch more mission endeavors as a state convention.

I experience joy as Texas Baptists respond to the need for Bible Study material with a plan to provide our Sunday School teachers with quality, distinctively Baptist materials.

I experience joy as I read of plans to provide theological education for our laity because we realize all God's children are ministers and must be involved in evangelism and missions.

I experience joy as I observe Texas Baptists making a special emphasis to help families in an age of moral decline.

I experience joy as I watch Texas Baptists support the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and stand firm for religious liberty and the separation of church and state as our

national convention leaves these treasured doctrines behind or redefines their meaning.

I experience *deep joy* as I watch Texas Baptists step up to fill the gap created by the turn of the SBC to fundamentalism. The world needs an authentic Baptist witness. As Texas Baptists we are assuming our responsibility to provide this witness as we expand our ministries, institutions, and programs.

Jesus was right. In all things, our grief will turn to joy if we stay true to Him and follow His example in our personal lives and in our corporate ministries. Come to Austin. Experience the joy of being a Texas Baptist! Support our efforts to leave the darkness and follow the light through the visionary recommendations of the Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee. Get involved in the mission of Texas Baptists and feel your sorrow turning to joy!

McFarland nomination, from page 1...

Texas 2000."

McFarland is a trial attorney in Houston. She earned undergraduate and law degrees from Baylor and studied at Oxford University in England.

In addition to the Executive Board, Baylor regents and E/E Committee, she has been a member of the advisory board of SEEDS, a Baptist hunger ministry, and Union Association's Center for Counseling.

In the local church, she participates in Baptist Young Women and Baptist Women, partnership missions and various committees.

Her husband, Keith, also is an attorney. They have two sons, Allen, 16, and Linch, 14.

McFarland said, "Texas Baptists always have been courageous frontier people. Their leaders have been forward-thinking risk takers, and I would be honored to help facilitate that attitude as we get ready to enter the next millennium."

McFarland is a sixth-generation Texan whose mother, grandmother and three aunts have been active members of First Church in Dawson for 50 years. That heritage is important, now and in the future, she stressed.

"I have seen Texas Baptist history, both personally and from studying the writings of our Texas Baptist forebears," she said. "We must not lose sight of our heritage. Even as we look to the future and take risks, we can learn from our Baptist ancestors. They valued what we value—the priesthood of the believer, a regenerate membership, the autonomy of the church, a free church in a free world, missions and evangelism. I have teen-age sons. I want them to live in the Baptist world with the freedom I've enjoyed."

Hogan nomination, from page 1...

E/E Committee had only increased it.

He was licensed and ordained by Moberly Church, Longview, and is a graduate of the University of Texas. He earned master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees at Southwestern Seminary.

Hogan and his wife, Marion, have a son, Matthew, and daughter, Amanda.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE:

Living in the Real World

By
David R. Currie,
Coordinator

Anyone that has attended any TBC state-wide function, i.e., our convocation, an annual breakfast, etc., knows my Mother, Mary Jim. She is the 80 year old bundle of energy running around gathering tickets, telling people where to go, trying to make sure her son is doing his job correctly. Mary Jim is committed, opinionated, energetic and mostly helpful. I love her deeply.

Growing up in her home I often heard the phrase "you've got to learn to live in the *real world*." I still hear that phrase frequently. It is her way of reminding her son to deal with reality and not live in a fantasy world. Mary Jim is a practical, "get it done" kind of person.

I have tried to take her counsel wisely and I believe Texas Baptists would do well to apply her wisdom of "living in the *real world*."

In my opinion, the Effectiveness and Efficiency Report is an attempt to challenge Texas Baptists to "live in the real world." What is the *Real World* Texas Baptists face in 1997?

Part of the *Real World* we live in has to do with the demographics of Texas. We are the fastest growing state in the country. We are primarily an unchurched state. There are 11 million unchurched people in Texas, more than the entire population of each of 42 other states.

We have a huge minority population and soon will be a minority majority state. Demographers project that Hispanics will make up over 50 percent of all Texans by the year 2030. Anglos are projected to be less than half of the Texas population by 2010. The E/E Committee report challenges us to reach these people for Christ through new churches and new ministries, especially multi-ethnic ministries. We cannot ignore these needs and "live in the *real world*."

Texas is a state with families in crisis. Our teen pregnancy rates are among the highest in the country. There are more single people than married people. The E/E report emphasizes an expanded family ministry through our Christian Life Commission. This is a *Real World* approach to this problem.

Part of the *Real World* we live in is a changing denomination structure as well as a declining commitment to denominations. No, I do not believe the primary purpose of the E/E report is to react to the changes in the Southern Baptist Convention. The primary purpose of the report is to cast a vision for

Texas Baptists for the future. But the report is not naive about the realities of Baptist life and that is good.

Southern Baptist life has undergone radical changes. Fundamentalists do control the SBC. The result is every seminary, every agency, every leader has changed. It is reality that Texas Baptists have not embraced these changes and in fact, are clearly uncomfortable with the changes.

Southern Baptist seminaries are different. The presidents we were comfortable with have left voluntarily or involuntarily. Most of the professors are different and have been trained differently. New seminaries and Baptist Houses of Study have been started including three in Texas alone.

The SBC Christian Life Commission (now renamed), where I worked in the late 1970s, is radically different. It advocates positions on religious liberty the old CLC clearly opposed.

SBC literature is now often written by individuals trained in non-SBC theological institutions. SBC literature emphasizes fundamentalist interpretations of scripture many traditional Baptists are not comfortable with.

In the *Real World*, people want to be more involved in the things they support. They want to go on mission trips, see what they are supporting with their financial gifts, roll up their sleeves and do missions themselves.

The Effectiveness and Efficiency Report is an attempt to challenge Texas Baptists to "live in the real world."

The E/E report deals with these changes in a *Real World* manner. It asks us to create literature options that churches can choose to utilize. It asks us to put more emphasis on Partnership Missions because people want more hands-on involvement.

In theological education, the E/E report accepts the reality that Texas Baptists want to support our new theological institutions and calls for their expansion. It calls for a Bible College because in the *Real World* of Texas Baptists, with over 5,700 churches and missions, and more being started every day, we need well trained ministers for these positions.

Finally, let us think a moment about the *Real World* of Baptist Polity. In Baptist life, local churches are the power. They worship as they choose, call the pastors they choose, ordain for ministry whomever they approve, and design their budgets to financially support what they choose.

Likewise, state conventions are autonomous entities. They have the right and re-

sponsibility to recommend programs to the churches for voluntary cooperation and budgets as they choose. The E/E report is doing this. Each local church will decide at what level they wish to support the emphases of the state convention.

Further, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, as national entities, are autonomous bodies who have the right to create programs and support institutions as they choose. State conventions and associations, as autonomous bodies, can relate to these national entities as they choose as can local churches. As I believe Bill Pinson once said, "Baptist polity can be messy but it still is wonderful."

Local churches can partner with whomever they choose and so can the BGCT.

An autonomous state convention, the BGCT, has to approve or reject this report. SBC leaders want the report rejected. Why? Because it means Texas Baptists are practicing autonomy by selecting ministries to support and are designing their own programs and supporting their own institutions which are distinctively different than SBC programs and institutions.

In the *Real World*, this report is about Texas Baptists remaining *Real Baptists*. If you vote to reject this report, you are voting for SBC type fundamentalist control of the BGCT. If you reject this report you are saying you do not like Baptist polity and prefer a top down, connectionalism approach to cooperation.

Will the relationship between the SBC and the BGCT change if this report is adopted? I certainly hope so!

The BGCT, as an autonomous state convention, has no business, in my opinion, maintaining a close partnership with some of the SBC structure, specifically Midwestern, Southern, and Southeastern Seminaries, as well as the former SBC Christian Life Commission, and the North American Mission Board.

Local churches can partner with whomever they choose and so can the BGCT. I hope and pray that the passage of this report means the BGCT will carefully examine its partnership and move away from some while clearly maintaining support for SBC foreign missionaries as well as CBF foreign missionaries.

If this report passes, local churches will have the option of supporting its recommendations as they so choose. If we reject this report, we are opening the door to allowing fundamentalists to control the BGCT. Mary Jim keeps reminding me to "live in the *real world*." She and I urge Texas Baptists to do the same.

The Call to be Pioneers

**By Charlie
McLaughlin,
Associate
Coordinator**

Texans are often characterized by a pioneer spirit. A pioneer is one who blazes a new trail, a new explorer of a new country, one who is first to investigate and develop a new way of doing things. Texas Baptists also have a reputation as being pioneers.

This year I am proud to say that the symbol of being a pioneer will be personal to the McLaughlin family. My dad, Dr. Charles P. McLaughlin, will receive the Pioneer Award for service in missions due to his service as director of the BGCT State Missions Commission from 1964 to 1987. Under his leadership several ministry programs began including the River Ministry, the Disaster Relief ministry, the new church emphasis, Partnership Missions, and the Hospitality House for families of inmates at Huntsville. He also had the reputation for being an advocate for Hispanic ministry. He had a broad vision for Texas.

He is a good example to follow. **Texas Baptists need to keep that pioneering spirit—the spirit that calls us to venture forth, to lead others even as we follow the Spirit of God.** It is appropriate that the Special Missions Program on Tuesday, November 11, at the convention in Austin be titled “Risk Taking/Texas 2000.” Just as God leads a church to risk and change in order to reach more people for Christ, God leads a state convention to risk and change.

The pioneer spirit is manifested in the report of the Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee. The E/E plan identifies the need for risk and change as the BGCT moves to the 21st century. The report compliments and encourages ministries which continue to be effective. Yet, it moves us beyond maintenance of the status quo, away from a common bureaucratic stance, into a posture that prepares the way for new trails of missions, evangelism, ethics, education and human services.

Of course, there will be the “nay sayers,” the ones who oppose any change—the **ones who oppose options and choices and believe that the BGCT should have a connective relationship of subservience to the SBC.** The E/E report does not force any church to stop relating to the SBC, but it recognizes that cooperation does not just come in one form.

In 1947, my father was the education minister for Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas. These are the words he selected for a church growth campaign.

“Christopher Columbus was reared under the philosophy of the Roman people. This phi-

losophy was ‘Ne Plus Ultra’ which meant ‘there was nothing beyond.’ It concluded that all the world had been explored and as they looked out to the sea, there were no other worlds to conquer, but when Columbus went to school in Portugal, he changed his philosophy from this philosophy of pessimism to the philosophy of ‘Mas Alla’ which means ‘More Beyond.’ It was from this philosophy that he discovered America.

“We need to see ‘More Beyond.’ Some people would have us believe that our church has done all that it can do. Some would have us believe that we have gone as far as we can go. The Lord wants us to say ‘Mas Alla.’ There is more beyond!”

The pioneer spirit of Columbus lead to a new world, the one in which we now live. Perhaps a new world of cooperation that utilizes diversity beckons us forward?

The issue is autonomy. When the BGCT meets in Austin on November 10-11, the vote on the E/E report will be about autonomy. We know about local church autonomy which is a historical Baptist principle. It is the right and responsibility of a church to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to define itself, to make decisions about ministry and ministers, to interpret the Scripture as a local body of believers, to move in a strategic direction according to the conscience of the people as they follow their understanding of God’s will.

The principle of church autonomy is the same for a state convention. The state convention not only has the *right*, according to Baptist polity, but the *responsibility* to seek out God’s direction for itself. Thus the E/E Committee began its work to “consider the best ways to assure the maximum efficiency

and effectiveness of BGCT cooperative efforts in missions, evangelism, education, ethics and human services...”

The results are five primary recommendations in the areas of 1) Ministry to Families, 2) Multi-Cultural Ministries, 3) Theological Education, 4) Partnership Missions, and 5) Biblically Based, Texas-focused Literature. A summary of the report is included as an insert in the middle of this newsletter.

The state convention not only has the *right*, according to Baptist polity, but the *responsibility* to seek out God’s direction for itself.

The report of the E/E Committee calls Texas Baptists to rekindle that pioneer spirit. For the BGCT to practice its autonomy does not place the state convention in opposition to the SBC. But it does mean that Texas Baptists accept the responsibility to decide for themselves the direction God is leading. The broader vision of cooperation for the purpose of missions and evangelism belongs to those who will be inclusive of those the SBC has excluded. **It is the broader vision put into practice that makes us pioneers.**

When I vote in favor of the E/E report I will simply be expressing my pioneer heritage.

KEY TIMES FOR THE BGCT

MONDAY: NOVEMBER 10

- 1:15 p.m. Seating of messengers
- 1:50 p.m. Budget presentation/vote
- 3:05 p.m. Effectiveness/Efficiency Report, part 1
- 4:20 p.m. Election of Officers: President
- 7:25 p.m. Election of Officers: First Vice President
- 7:40 p.m. Effectiveness/Efficiency Report, part 2
- 9:00 p.m. Election of Officers: Second Vice President

TUESDAY: NOVEMBER 11

- 7:00 a.m. Texas Baptists Committed Breakfast
- 10:10 a.m. Miscellaneous Business
- 10:55 a.m. Convention Sermon: Levi Price, Jr.
- 11:30 a.m. Vote on Resolutions
- Tuesday afternoon: Texas Baptist Men and Texas Woman’s Missionary Union
- 6:45 p.m. Mission reports
- 7:50 p.m. Missions Program: Risk Taking/Texas 2000

Grass Roots Support for the Effectiveness/Efficiency Report

I read with great excitement the report from the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee. In a time of change, this committee has made a balanced response which will enable us to maintain our identity as Baptists but at the same time recognizes the need for new ways of being Baptists in today's world.

I affirm the key concepts cited in the report and wholeheartedly support the recommendations.

Brian L. Harbour, Pastor, FBC, Richardson

I can't remember when I was so enthusiastic about reports of this type. The breadth and depth of the committee's planning is very impressive. The willingness to examine new paradigms and to seek out new models for ministry was especially gratifying to me.

Praise the Lord, we have within the state of Texas excellent examples of new mission paradigms and many ministry models to evaluate, which should enable us to build upon them and give us a "running start." We don't have to reinvent the wheel for innovative ministries.

The attention given to the mission opportunities of the "inner-city," to multi-racial needs, and the recognition of the desirability of a different theological education for lay people and for bivocational pastors is something that I've been working and praying for during the past 10 years that I've been involved in inner-city missions.

Bud Hudgens, Tallowood Church, Houston

I read with interest that we have the possibility of writing our own literature in Texas. I am so pleased.

The Hobbs commentary on the Life and Work Sunday School lesson for September 7 said, "For example, a Baptist university president suggested in a recent book that Jesus was not God and contended that making Jesus into a divine figure to be worshiped was largely a mistake." If this is true, why not say what president and what university and give the title of the book? I can't help believe when I read something like this that the author needed to point a would-be enemy so as to put up a smoke screen for himself.

Pat Walker, Amarillo

I have never been as excited about a report as I am the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee report. I have been pastoring in Texas for 30-plus years, and I think that this has to be a high-water mark of our efforts as Texas Baptists in being God's people. The report demonstrates a realism and vision unparalleled in the past. It is also characterized by a sensitivity to all who are Texas Baptists. I am excited about presenting this report to my church, and I think they will be as excited in receiving it.

Pete Freeman, Pastor, FBC, The Woodlands

The members of the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee deserve the gratitude of all Texas Baptists for their recognition of Texas as unique mission field and for proposing strategies that will enable the BGCT to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord in our state.

This is an excellent report, with excellent recommendations, emphasizing the work of the local church, the role of the laity, meeting the unique needs of Texas and building upon historic Baptist heritage.

Two specific areas of emphasis caught my attention - theological education and literature for laypersons which are both Bible-based and Texas focused.

I urge Texas Baptists to study the report and recommendations with the same care as went into its preparation and to commit themselves to its implementation following adoption in November.

Olin F. Davis, Fort Worth

In a day when it seems as if the local church is losing authority, it is nice to see that the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee report celebrates the decision-making power of the local congregation. Throughout the document, the motif of "church first" is demonstrated. This is a clear affirmation by the Baptist General Convention of Texas that, as the report states, "The local church is the key to reaching the lost." Many other attributes of the document are worthy of praise - affirmation of the Baptist General Convention of Texas leadership, emphasis on a biblical basis, recognition of control and ethnic changes and a firm stance upon historic Baptist heritage.

Howard Batson, Pastor, FBC, Amarillo

I support the E/E report for four reasons:

First: I served on the E/E Committee and know first hand the hours spent on this report by members of the committee.

Second: I believe this is a gracious report. By that I mean that it looks honestly and graciously at the present situation in the culture and in our relationships with other Baptist entities. However, it never loses sight of what Texas Baptists are about. We are not about fighting a political war. We are about winning people in our state, nation, and world to Jesus Christ. This is our agenda.

Third: this is an institutionally inclusive report. It looks at all that we are doing as Texas Baptists.

Finally, this is a personally inclusive report. I am excited about us aggressively addressing racism in our midst, so that all might hear about Christ, so that all might worship Christ, so that all might serve Christ in the fellowship of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

I am also excited that unlike the Southern Baptist Convention we have tried to increase opportunities for all who are in our churches. The last 18 years has seen a profound narrowing in the Southern Baptist Convention. To the SBC, not all are qualified to participate (except to send their money, but only through their designated channels), not all are qualified to write for SBC publications, not all are qualified to speak to SBC audiences, not all are qualified to lead. In the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the door remains open to all of a cooperative spirit to work with others who are a part of this Convention.

Those criticisms that have been leveled at the report, in my judgement, come from three sources. First, some criticisms are based on misunderstandings regarding the nature of the recommendations. Some criticisms come from those who incorrectly believe that we have a moral obligation to follow the SBC into fundamentalism. Others criticize the report because they deeply resent the freedom we are trying to provide for everyone to express their faith, convictions and call.

Michael Chancellor, Pastor, Crescent Heights, Abilene

Martin Luther King, Jr., made the sad observation that all too often the church has been the tail lights rather than the headlights of society. The recommendations of the E/E Committee are needed steps. The recommendations on family and cultural diversity are long overdue, and speak to Baptists who misguidedly seek to recover a mythic cultural past. In addition, the emphases on theological education and Texas-focused literature are critical in a time when many coming into our churches are ignorant of our distinctives and heritage. These emphases are imperative when we consider the insistence of many SBC leaders upon a revisionist reading of Baptist history and theology that dishonors our past and truncates our future. Messengers to the 1997 convention should wholeheartedly endorse the E/E report and recommendations. Even more importantly, we should pledge our support as they are implemented.

Steven Spivey, Pastor, Woodlake Church, San Antonio

BGCT PRESIDENTS ENDORSE EFFECTIVENESS/EFFICIENCY PLAN

As former and current presidents of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, we are very familiar with the leadership, institutions and programs of the BGCT. We have all worked closely with Dr. Bill Pinson and the staff of the BGCT. We are familiar with the institutions which educate, heal and serve Texas, America, even the world, in Jesus' name and in the name of Texas Baptists.

Texas Baptists have consistently kept their focus on Jesus and missions, education and human service in His name. The BGCT has avoided becoming a political convention, working hard to include all Texas Baptists as we seek to serve the needs of local churches in their ministry.

We have studied closely the recommendations of the BGCT Effectiveness and Efficiency (E/E) Committee and wish to enthusiastically endorse the excellent and visionary recommendations of this committee. Our reasons are outlined below.

Vision: Texas Baptists have a history of being visionary. Texas Baptists started Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and later entrusted the seminary to the Southern Baptist Convention to hold in trust. Texas Baptists started a Christian Life Commission. Texas Baptists have been pioneers in Partnership Missions, partnering for years with the work in Minnesota and Wisconsin as well as countries like Brazil and Australia.

The E/E Committee plan continues this visionary approach in recommending an expansion in Partnership Missions, a Bible College, theological education for the laity, multi-cultural ministries, increased ministries to families and biblically based Texas-focused literature.

Baptist Principles: Texas Baptists have consistently supported and honored historic Baptist principles and practices. The E/E Committee plan continues this tradition. Nothing in this report contradicts

Baptist principles such as local church autonomy and the priesthood of all believers. No Texas Baptist church is required to support these recommendations financially. No Texas Baptist church is required to use new literature. The plan gives Texas Baptist churches more options in ministries to support and resources to use. The report consistently praises Baptist principles and the autonomy of the local church.

Cooperation: Texas Baptists have consistently emphasized voluntary cooperation as the basis for unity. This plan celebrates autonomy, diversity, freedom and local decision making. This plan honestly recognizes the differences among Baptists and encourages unity amidst this diversity. The plan encourages the support of missionaries and institutions as chosen by the local church. Such emphasis allows Texas Baptists to cooperate freely as individuals and congregations.

As Texas Baptists prepare to enter the 21st century, it is appropriate we outline a vision for effectiveness and efficiency. This plan identifies critical needs and makes appropriate recommendations to keep Texas Baptists in the forefront of missions, evangelism, education and human services. We enthusiastically encourage the messengers to this year's annual meeting to approve this visionary plan.

Phil Lineberger, 1990-'91

Jerold McBride, 1994-'95

Charles Wade, 1996-'97

Paul Powell, 1986-'87

Milton Cunningham, 1978-'79

Winfred Moore, 1984-'85

EFFECTIVENESS/EFFICIENCY PLAN UNDERGIRDS VISION 2000

Hispanic leaders encourage support of the E/E Committee Report

The Effectiveness/Efficiency Report has encouraged many Hispanic Baptist leaders in our convention because it will compliment Vision 2000 objectives.

The Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee's recommendations are not only a great need but an obligation if we are to win Hispanics for Christ. We enthusiastically support the vision of the Effectiveness/Efficiency plan for preparing us for the 21st century. Demographers project that by the year 2010 the minorities in this state will become the majority. The Multi-Cultural Ministries recommendation has designed the mechanism to implement a plan of action to win a great number of our people for the Lord. All of the ministry recommendations can assist and strengthen Hispanic work in Texas.

We encourage the messengers to the BGCT to support the E/E Committee recommendations.

Noah Rodriguez, Layman, San Antonio

Sam Medina, Iglesia Bautista Alianza, Lubbock

Rudy Sanchez, Primera Iglesia Bautista, Dallas

Antonio Estrada, South Main Baptist Church, Houston

Al Flores, Jr., Primera Iglesia Bautista, San Antonio

Dan Rivera, Hispanic Theological Seminary, San Antonio

Rudy Camacho, Layman, Fort Worth

Eli Rodriguez, Layman, Dallas

Ellis Orosco, Corpus Christi Baptist Church

Omar Pachicano, Hispanic Theological Seminary, San Antonio

Ramero Pena, Jr., Christ the King Baptist Church, Waco

Mateo Rendon, Jr., Primera Iglesia Bautista, Corpus Christi

MORE SUPPORT FOR E/E REPORT

I strongly support the E/E Committee report. This report reaffirms the freedom of the individual and the autonomy of each Baptist entity including the BGCT. It speaks strongly of the interest of Texas Baptists in missions. We put deeds to our words, and money where our mouth is.

The literature matter simply says we want literature that will not forfeit our cherished Baptists distinctives. We want all the writers and editors to be real Baptists. (The authority of the Bible, a personal faith, the autonomy of every church, the priesthood of every believer, the competency of each soul to approach God, and a free church in a free state.)

After eighteen years the fundamentalists have finally convinced me that the real issue among Southern Baptists really is over belief in the Bible. The fundamentalists do not believe the Bible, and those of us they have accused of not believing it are the ones who do believe it. They do not believe in Matthew 28: 18-20 and Acts 1: 8 because they give such a small percent of their gifts to missions. They do not believe John 3:16...*that whosoever believeth in Him...* I am told that at least two of their seminary presidents are five point Calvinists (only the elect can be saved).

This, in effect, does away with the need for missions and evangelism. I do not personally know any Baptists who subscribe to these beliefs. Dr. Williams R. Estep, a retired church history professor from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, published an attack on SBC Calvinism in *The Baptist Standard* a few months ago. Estep wrote that Calvinism is logically anti-missionary, robs persons of responsibility for their conduct, and is marked by tolerance, divisiveness, and haughtiness.

A vote for the E/E Committee report says to a people called Baptists, and to all people, there is still a Baptist Convention that believes in, and honors, freedom. I personally urge you to vote for this report and for FREEDOM.

Ferris Akins

Former pastor and retired Director of Missions

Effectiveness/Efficiency Report is “more than...!”

Leroy Fenton, First Baptist Church, Waxahachie

The E/E Recommendation is more than a timely document—it is a document for our times. It is more than a document of practical Christianity—it is practical in its application. It is more than a document for the future—it does have futuristic impact. It is more than a document on structure—it will influence structural consideration. It is more than a document about the BGCT—it does center on the dynamics of the Convention. It is more than a document about theology—it does strongly affirm the classic doctrines of our faith. It is more than a document about politics—it does acknowledge the political arena in which initiatives were spawned. It is more than a document about change—its content was motivated and inspired by change in culture and paradigms.

At best, it is a document that is personal. It is about you, me, us, and our churches who need to get serious about reaching our state for Christ, about being at our personal best in effectiveness and efficiency. It focuses on the battle lines in our state which is on our streets and in the houses of our local communities.

The focus is an intensification of a “church-first” strategy which moves Texas Baptists more in line with the purpose statement of the Convention which is “to assist and encourage churches and associations...” By amassing the resources of the state convention to be available to the local church through consultation and customization, there is a cooperative partnership that, inspired, can turn a congregation into a church, the body of Christ.

Moving from a conference to a consultation mode was already in process but needs confirmation and affirmation from the Baptist folk in Texas. Such an affirmation strengthens the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of every believer and reminds us of the servant role of the BGCT and the purpose of every church.

It strengthens the position of the BGCT as a “channel of choice” by which every church can be inspired by God to find a vision for itself and find a way to work together. By being personal, it humanizes the process and finds decentralization as a core value of effective cooperation.

It is about clergy, laity, denominational servants, change and responsibility. Someone said that insanity is doing the same thing the

same way and expecting different results.

Texas Baptists lead this denomination in almost every category by which it can be measured but we are still stagnant in winning the lost and underachievers in ministry. This document encourages changes when change can create a better atmosphere in which to accomplish our purpose.

Traditions are not acceptable when they only maintain an organization or a program. The document encourages openness to new ideas, to new ways to organize local congregations and the BGCT, to new ideas about outreach, to new relationships to the Divisions of the BGCT and its personnel, to new means of adapting program resources to the needs of individual congregations, to new means of time management and reducing red tape, to new and better use of technology and distance learning, to new delivery systems for theological education. The document expects better results in the future and expects Texas Baptist to find a way to improve its effectiveness.

It is about relationships. During the past few years, Texas Baptists have been “bashed” by some SBC leaders who appreciate control but do not appreciate cooperation. For power and control, these leaders have encouraged division and takeover. What they cannot control, they cannot tolerate. I remind you of our practical and precious “soul freedom” in Christ which is implemented doctrinally in the fact that the SBC leadership, the BGCT leadership, and the Association leadership work for the churches and not the contrary.

It is the privilege of being a free Baptist to have the opportunity to give and cooperate with whom one chooses. The document encourages relationships and sharing tasks with denominational entities that have common purpose and vision. Networking these relationships will benefit God’s work universally. Using the BGCT as a “channel of choice” in relationships promotes effectiveness when Christians can work and give with trust and confidence. We must build bridges and not burn them.

It is about vision. We should be thankful for the vision of Charles Davenport who started this process with his motion at the San Antonio Convention. The staff of the BGCT has a vision for God and by adopting this recommendation they have another way of sharing in ours.

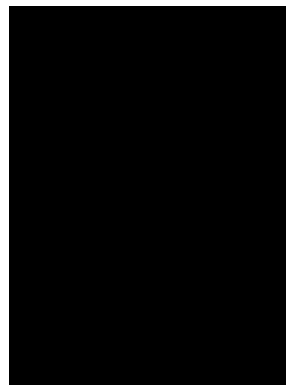
“FRIENDS OF TRUETT SEMINARY DINNER” AT CONVENTION

Texas Baptists made history in Fort Worth last year when more than 600 people gathered for the first ever *Friends of Truett Seminary* dinner. Plan now to attend this year’s dinner during the Baptist General Convention of Texas, November 10, 5:30 p.m., at the Hyatt Regency on Town Lake, in Austin.

Featured speaker will be Dr. Russell H. Dilday. Tickets are \$16 each and must be purchased in advance. Reserva-

tions may be made by calling 254-710-3755 or 1-800-BAYLORU option 5. Orders received after Nov. 1 may be picked up at the Convention.

TBC is very proud and grateful for Truett seminary and the Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons. With fundamentalists now controlling all six SBC related seminaries, these new institutions are vital to the future of Texas Baptists.



Dr. Russell H. Dilday

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Efforts to control continue...

Southwestern Seminary avoids faculty trial with settlement

By Marv Knox

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) — Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary apparently has avoided a faculty trial by coming to terms with a professor removed from his classroom for criticizing seminary administrators.

Jeff Pool, 45, an assistant professor of systematic theology, will not return to the classroom. But he will receive salary and benefits through the current academic year, which ends next July 31.

Administrators at the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, pulled Pool from his teaching duties just before the seminary's fall term started in late August. That move closely followed Pool's public charges of "academic censorship" against the seminary.

"I really was removed from teaching not because of my teaching, but because I voiced dissent about actions of the administrators of this institution," Pool said.

On the advice of the seminary's attorney, the dean of the seminary's School of Theology, Tommy Lea, limited his response to a prepared statement.

"The seminary guidelines require that personnel matters be handled confidentially," Lea said. "The administration has acted in the best interests of the seminary and Dr. Pool in accordance with the seminary's policies and procedures.

"Dr. Pool has shown himself to be a capable scholar in his discipline of systematic theology. He has demonstrated commendable interest in his students."

"However, the parties have agreed that Dr. Pool should exercise his teaching ministry in another institutional setting," Lea said. "The seminary has attempted to provide Dr. Pool and his family financial security to allow him to find another position without interruption of income or loss of benefits important to his family."

The controversy began last year, when Pool edited an issue of the seminary's "Southwestern Journal of Theology." The disputed issue of the journal examined the Southern Baptist Convention's "Baptist Faith and Message" doctrinal statement. The seminary suspended

publication of the journal.

Pool offered the articles to Smyth & Helwys Publishing of Macon, Ga., which published them in a book called "*Sacred Mandates of Conscience: Interpretations of the Baptist Faith and Message.*"

In a preface to the book and in subsequent interviews, Pool called Southwestern's refusal to publish the journal "academic censorship."

Seminary officials have denied the censorship charge on two counts. First, they noted they waived the rights to the rejected articles, freeing their authors to publish them. Second, they said the decision not to publish the journal was made by an editorial board comprised of faculty.

Pool acknowledged not all Southwestern faculty agree with him, but he contended the journal's editorial board was coerced by pressure from Southwestern President Ken Hemphill and academic administrators.

And that pressure is pushing the seminary into an increasingly narrow spectrum from which it can operate, Pool charged. "Academic freedom here certainly is under significant threat," he said. "It's always been tenuous; this is a very, very conservative place. ... But Southwestern is being rapidly aligned with the 'new SBC' and the SBC structure."

President Hemphill was selected by trustees elected during the theological/political campaign to turn the SBC sharply to the right, shortly after those trustees fired former President Russell Dilday, Pool noted.

"There is an agenda for the seminary to follow," which includes hushing all forms of disagreement or dissent, he claimed.

His ouster from the classroom sends a signal to faculty and potential faculty that "self criticism" within the institution will not be tolerated, Pool said.

"An individual is not necessarily disloyal because he criticizes an institution or a denomination," he said. "But those thoughts and comments may grow out of his very loyalty. ... It is vital that Baptists do not lose the principle of internal criticism. If there is no self-criticism, how do we call ourselves to account for our actions?"

Pastors denied teaching posts over ties to Fellowship

By Lacy Thompson

(ABP) — Two Southern Baptist pastors have been disqualified as adjunct instructors for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary because of connections with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Jon Stubblefield, pastor of First Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., said he was approached in January about teaching Greek in the seminary's Shreveport extension center. Later, he was told the course was being canceled for financial reasons.

When he offered to teach the course for free, he said, he was informed he was disqualified because he spoke at a state Fellowship meeting.

Stubblefield's church also allows members to channel funds to the Atlanta-based Fellowship, a moderate organization offering alternatives to missions and ministries of the conservative-led Southern Baptist Convention.

In a letter to Stubblefield, New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley wrote: "Because the CBF has chosen to be very public and aggressive in presenting itself as an alternative to the SBC and its ministries, and because the CBF is basing its growth and fund-raising strategies on diverting SBC churches from the support of the SBC and its ministries, we cannot in good conscience use Cooperative Program [the SBC's unified budget] funds for teachers who are actively and publicly supporting the CBF."

Stubblefield acknowledged leading a session on Baptist distinctives at a state chapter of the Fellowship. He said he was asked

to do so by a church member.

The church's associate pastor is head of the Louisiana chapter of the Fellowship and as many as 40 percent of church members opt to have portions of their church offerings channeled to the Fellowship.

"While this is true, the majority believe in and give generously to the Cooperative Program," Stubblefield said. "Our church gave \$65,000 to the Lottie Moon Offering last year, and we just completed our Annie Armstrong offering in the amount of \$20,000. Our church historically and currently is solidly anchored in the (SBC)."

Stubblefield said the seminary's policy will only drive persons with Fellowship sympathies away from the SBC "and will cause those who have wholeheartedly supported SBC work to question the continuing efforts of our current convention leadership to exclude all who do not agree with them."

A similar thing happened to Philip Wise, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dothan, Ala., who said he was "talked into" teaching a two-term course at the seminary in an Alabama center by administrators who assured him "politics" were not a factor in selecting faculty for off-campus courses.

Near the end of the first term, Wise said he was told he would not be used in the second term because of his "connection" to the Fellowship.

Wise termed the action as a breach of commitment and vowed

continued next page...

Efforts to control continue...

Longtime Southern Seminary librarian fired after challenging SBC leader

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) — The longtime reference librarian at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was fired Sept. 26, apparently because he wrote a personal letter questioning statements made in a chapel address by Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff.

Paul Debusman, a 35-year employee of the seminary in Louisville, Ky., was 10 months away from retirement. He was given one month's severance pay and immediately dismissed.

As a result of the "involuntary retirement," Debusman, 64, will lose some retirement benefits he otherwise would have received.

Seminary President Albert Mohler did not return a phone call seeking comment on the firing. Seminary spokesman David Porter said Mohler would not comment because of the confidential legal nature of personnel matters.

Friends and colleagues of Debusman described him as one of the most "gentle" and "mild-mannered" people they know. "Paul is the kindest man in all the world," said his pastor, Ron Sisk. Debusman reluctantly spoke about his situation, noting that he still has "a lot of positive feelings for the seminary" and that he's "not trying to recruit any people" to his side of the firing dispute.

SBC President Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., spoke in chapel at Southern Sept. 16, as part of the seminary's Pastor Appreciation Day.

According to seminary-produced news reports, Elliff lauded the changes toward conservatism that have occurred at Southern under Mohler's administration. Debusman said in that context Elliff suggested he would not have been invited to speak in chapel under previous moderate administrations.

"At least the tone of what I felt he was saying was that in the former days he would not have been invited," Debusman explained.

That prompted the librarian to write Elliff a personal letter in which he attempted to correct what he perceived as historical inaccuracies in Elliff's comments. Studying and working at the seminary since the 1950s, Debusman has witnessed the administration of three presidents: Duke McCall, Roy Honeycutt and Mohler.

"I reminded him that [in the past] we had heard SBC presidents and other ranking members of the Southern Baptist Convention," Debusman said. "Chapel as I remembered it from the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s was a time when we heard everyone. There was a deliberate strategy to bring in different points of view."

"That's no longer true," Debusman said he pointed out to Elliff. Under the Mohler administration, "some people will not be invited," he explained. "My pastor will not be invited."

Debusman is a longtime member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, the Baptist church nearest the seminary. In the past, the moderate congregation was closely linked with the seminary. In recent years that relationship has faded, as moderate faculty and

students were gradually replaced by conservatives during the 1980s.

"The ironic thing to me is I was attempting to be conciliatory," Debusman said. "I'm not naive, and I don't mean to sound Pollyanish. But I closed my letter by saying my heart had been broken since 1979 by the way we had sniped at each other and I would to God that we could unite around the larger mission of sharing the gospel, discipling and equipping believers."

"Although critical, I was intending to be in my little tiny way some kind of conciliatory spirit and expressing the fact that I'm broken-hearted because we can't find bigger objectives and unite even through our differences," he added.

Elliff declined to comment on Debusman's letter and firing. "This is, apparently, a matter concerning the personnel policies at Southern Seminary. I have no statement to make," Elliff said in a faxed response to an interview request.

However, Debusman said it was obvious to him that Elliff had communicated with the seminary. Debusman did not receive a personal reply from Elliff until the Monday after he was fired.

Debusman said seminary administrators told him his actions had been "harmful" to the seminary.

In April 1995, in response to controversy over Mohler's firing of Carver School dean Diana Garland, seminary trustees adopted a new "policy on constructive relationships." That policy originally stated: "Faculty members and staff of this institution are not to act in ways that are injurious or detrimental to the seminary's relationship with the denomination, donors or other constituencies within and without the seminary community."

In April 1997, after extensive consultation with faculty and staff, the policy was amended to state that faculty and staff "should seek to relate constructively to the denomination, donors and other constituencies."

News of Debusman's firing shocked and angered his fellow church members at Crescent Hill, Sisk said.

"He is held in enormous respect in our church," Sisk said. "He has been elected term after term to our board of deacons, frequently heads our nominating committee because of his knowledge of the church and sensitivity to persons. You won't find anyone to fault his character or suggest he would ever be guilty of indiscretion."

"We announced his firing and the basic terms on Sunday morning. The congregation rose as one and gave him a prolonged standing ovation in celebration of his integrity."

Sisk said Debusman has been "unfailingly helpful" to generations of students doing research at Southern.

At Crescent Hill, he sings in the choir and "visits in the nursing homes more than I do," Sisk said.

"He is a devoted husband, father and grandfather, and in my mind is a sterling example of the very best of Baptist faith. He is simply a gentle man who spoke his mind in an ungentle venue."

Pastor's denied teaching posts...

never to make himself vulnerable "to this kind of unchristian treatment from my alma mater and its leaders." He said he has received no response to his letter.

When contacted by the *Louisiana Baptist Message*, both Kelley and Assistant Provost Jimmy Dukes said the seminary has a policy of not addressing personnel decisions publicly.

However, Dukes said the Greek class would be offered in Shreveport this fall and the policy about use of Fellowship-related persons was not a new one for the school.

Kelley said he has not consulted with other seminary leaders but that he would imagine they are taking similar stances.

Kelley said the policy not to use persons related to the Fellowship is not written "but it is something I think our [trustees] feel pretty

strongly about."

Kelley said seminary leaders have not defined what level of Fellowship support would disqualify a person under the policy. But he said he does not consider a church that simply has members who support the Fellowship to be an active Fellowship church.

"Our church has never taken a stand for CBF," he said. "We consider ourselves mainline Southern Baptist. We support the Cooperative Program. We give generously to the mission offerings. In effect, this decision penalizes the majority of First Baptist Church of Shreveport, who support the Cooperative Program by automatically stereotyping this church as a CBF church."

Stubblefield called the policy a "tightening of the screws" by SBC leaders. "I think it's an effort to continue to exclude within the denomination."

TEXAS WMU PRESIDENTS SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS/EFFICIENCY PLAN

Woman's Missionary Union of Texas exists to support Baptist mission enterprises through prayer, through giving to mission offerings and through missions education.

When we hear of a plan designed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of a Baptist entity (in this case, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, as well as the ministries of local Texas Baptist churches and associations), we examine the plan closely for its effect on Southern Baptist missions.

After scrutinizing the recommendations of the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee of the BGCT, we enthusiastically endorse its adoption by the messengers to this year's annual meeting.

Why?

This plan recognizes the Texas mission field, and at the same time encourages the expansion of partnership missions, which has proven to be an especially effective method of doing missionary work and promoting missions education.

This plan should enhance support for all Southern Baptist mission endeavors as it continues the approach approved in the 1994 BGCT annual meeting in Amarillo... encouraging church-directed cooperative giving.

This plan also makes the visionary recommendation that the BGCT explore the possibility of becoming a member organization of the Baptist World Alliance. Another excellent suggestion is to network with missionary-sending organizations to train "lay envoys" sent out to teach, reach, and preach on international mission fields where they work and live. Both of these recommendations will strengthen the effectiveness of our mission efforts.

Missions has always been the heartbeat of Baptists. A desire for effective and efficient mission work is what gave birth to our conventions. This plan continues the primacy of missions for Texas Baptists. We endorse its passage.

Jeane Law, 1996 to present

Ophelia Humphrey, 1964-'68

Mauriece Johnston, 1972-'76, 1980-'84

Amelia Bishop, 1984-'88

Mary Humphries, 1992-'96

Huis Coy Egge, 1976-'80

"Soul Competency Takes a Vacation"

By Michael Clingenpeel

RICHMOND, Va. — The battle for the soul of the Southern Baptist Convention ended several years ago. Conservatives bested moderates in a winner-take-all contest.

The battle was over power, said some, not theology. On the surface they were correct. It was a struggle to gain control over the institutions, money and processes of the SBC.

Secretly, however, many people feared it was what conservatives said it was—an issue of theology. The two groups were far from ideological and theological twins, and the winner earned the right to stamp its theology into the hearts and minds of current and future Baptists. Power, after all, is the ability to achieve purpose. The purpose, the end goal, was theological.

I thought of this when I read a release from *Baptist Press* last week. The story described publication of a new book compiling selected writings of E.Y. Mullins, who in the first quarter of this century was president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Current SBTSP President Al Mohler is the compiler of the articles, which are being published by Broadman and Holman, the publishing arm of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In 1908 Mullins wrote *The Axioms of Religion*, in which he enunciated the doctrine of soul competency, claiming it as the "historical significance of the Baptists."

Soul competency is the idea that every human being is free and responsible before God for his or her faith or the lack of it.

The idea is at least as old as the Bible's concepts of God and humanity. God is revealed in general and specific ways to human beings. Human beings, created in God's likeness, have the capacity to choose or reject God, and we are responsible for our decision.

Soul competency does not mean we are sufficient apart from God, or that we can believe anything we want. It recognizes dependence upon Scripture as the primary means of God's revelation, and acknowledges Jesus Christ as the fullest revelation of God.

Mullins recognized soul competency as the hub of Baptist theology and practice. Everything else—priesthood of the believer, local church autonomy, separation of church and state, regenerant church membership, believer's baptism—was spoke and rim.

According to the *Baptist Press* story, Mohler blames Mullins for much of Baptists' reputed theological drift. Mullins elevated personal experience above revelation, according to Mohler, making the author-

ity of Scripture secondary. Mullins, who in 1925 chaired the committee that produced the original Baptist Faith and Message statement, "set the stage for doctrinal ambiguity and theological minimalism," the story quotes Mohler as writing. Soul competency, he continues, is "an acid dissolving religious authority, congregationalism, confessionalism and mutual theological accountability."

Don't miss what's happening here. Conservatives won control of the SBC power. Ideologues like Mohler now direct the work of institutions that are reshaping the theological and ecclesiastical identity of Southern Baptists theology.

The new Southern Baptists will be champions of doctrinal correctness, but the new orthodoxy comes at the expense of freedom of the individual conscience. Without Mullins' emphasis on soul competency, Mohler's rigid Calvinist orthodoxy will likely stamp out an assembly line of Southern Seminary graduates who easily recite the arcane intricacies of a pre-approved theological system, but who lack an appreciation for the liberating mysteries of the Spirit and the humbling freshness of grace.

In the end, a theological system that holds soul competency in low regard easily degenerates into loveless, graceless legalism. It extends to no one else the freedom to think creatively under the tutelage of the Spirit, and is quick to rebuke actions that refuse to walk in lock step to its narrow expectations.

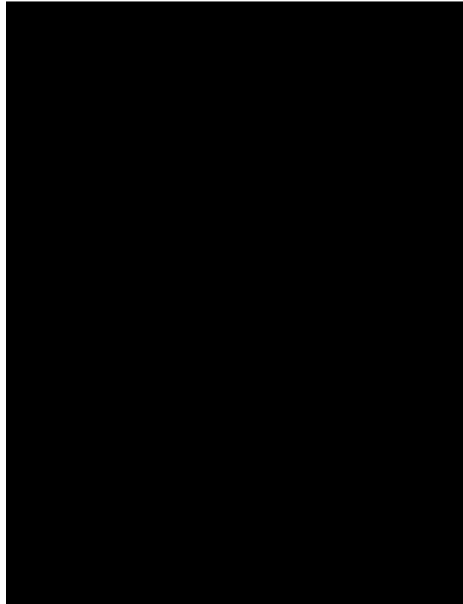
Perhaps that is the only explanation for Mohler's recent decision to fire a 35-year employee of his seminary, whose principal transgression was to disagree with a statement made during a chapel address given by the current SBC president. When the employee, librarian Paul Debusman, wrote a letter to Tom Elliff questioning his statement that conservatives like himself would not have been allowed to speak in chapel prior to Mohler's administration, Mohler fired him for actions "harmful" to the seminary.

Students at Southern Seminary, like all theological students, learn from the writings and behavior of their mentors. The past three generations learned theology and faith from theologians like E.Y. Mullins. Future Southern Baptists will have their leaders mentored by theologians like Al Mohler.

What a pity.

Editor's Note: Mike Clingenpeel is editor and business manager of the Religious Herald, the newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. This editorial appeared in the October 9 issue of the Herald.

GRANT TEAFF TICKETS GOING FAST



Grant Teaff

Order your tickets for the ninth annual TBC breakfast featuring Grant Teaff as soon as possible. The breakfast will be at 7:00 a.m., Tuesday, November 11, in the Palmer Auditorium in Austin. Tickets are \$15 each. Please use the breakfast reservation form below. Or, you can make your reservations at our Internet location **www.txbc.org**.

PLEASE NOTE!!! WE WILL NOT BE SELLING TICKETS AT THE DOOR FOR THE BREAKFAST. ALL TICKETS MUST BE RESERVED AND PAID FOR PRIOR TO THE BREAKFAST.

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CO-CHAIR
THOUGHTS
FROM
BILL BRIAN

**E/E
Committee
Report**

**Texas Baptists as
Future Oriented—Trend Setting**

Laymen and laywomen across Texas can take encouragement that a bright future lies ahead for our BGCT as carefully outlined in the Report of the Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee.

I am grateful to fellow West Texan Charles Davenport of Tulia for bringing to the 1995 BGCT meeting the motion which messengers adopted and which formed the beginning point for a thorough-going examination of where we are as a state convention and what measures we should adopt to remain oriented toward the future.

Trend setters among Baptists—that's where I want to be—not for our sakes but for the thousands of Texans who do not know the love of Christ in the mission fields right in our own Texas communities. Trend setters—through partnerships to share Christ across America and to the peoples of the world—for whom the story of Jesus is completely unknown.

I am grateful, too, for the hard work and commitment of Committee members including Chairman Darold Morgan, Vice-Chairman Leroy Fenton, and the twenty-five other committee members who bring to us the Report and Recommendations, vital tools that can springboard us to action.

What is most positive about the Report and the Recommendations?

First, it affirms our BGCT and its leadership. We are blessed with the best at our Baptist building in Dallas. A friend of mine, also a member of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, recently told me that he would trust the executive staff of our BGCT with his life.

Second, it affirms a "church-first" strategy. That might sound selfish at first glance, but indeed, it is a recognition that the local church is the key to reaching the lost. I am thrilled at the prospect of increased assistance, encouragement, and challenge to local churches of all sizes to customize a vision and methodology uniquely suited to their communities.

Third, the affirmation of the autonomy of local churches and of our state convention is Baptist to the core. It embraces and nourishes the notion of voluntary cooperation to accomplish greater things. That's the kind of partnering that will prepare us to meet the challenges of vastly changing demographics and diverse cultures that were unknown in Texas 20 years ago.

Fourth, and perhaps most critical to the development of capable clergy and lay leaders, the Report challenges Texas Baptists to insist that seminary and Bible college experiences in Texas teach historic Baptist principles of Scripture authority, regenerate faith,

soul freedom, church/state separation, honoring the call of all persons to ministry, and local church autonomy under the lordship of Christ Jesus. Some of those principles are lately demeaned in Southern Baptist seminaries across America.

How should we laypeople respond to the Report of the E/E Committee? Study the Report printed in full in the Baptist Standard and available from the BGCT office in Dallas. Be

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prepared to listen to debate and to vote to approve the Recommendations of the E/E Committee. (The Report itself will not be voted on.) Encourage your church to elect a full complement of messengers to the BGCT in Austin. Continue to pray daily as the 100 days of prayer for the Convention draw to a close.

I'll see you in Austin!

MISSION STATEMENT OF TEXAS BAPTISTS COMMITTED

Texas Baptists Committed is dedicated to reach people for Christ through local churches, to uphold historic Baptist principles, and to cooperate with the mission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its related institutions.

Texas Baptists Committed

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