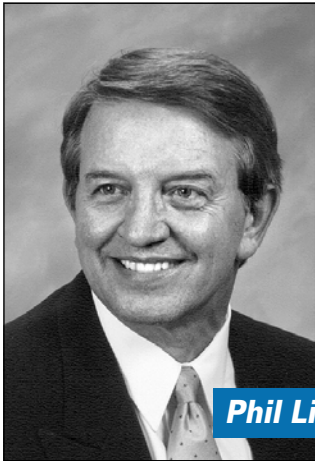




# Texas Baptists Committed

September 2000

## Phil Lineberger to be Breakfast Speaker



**Phil Lineberger**

Phil Lineberger, pastor of Williams Trace Baptist Church in Sugarland, Texas, will be the speaker for the twelfth annual Texas Baptists Committed breakfast. Lineberger is well known to Texas Baptists for his vision, leadership and service to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The breakfast will be at 7:00 a.m., Tuesday, October 31, Corpus Christi A-B-C Ballroom at the Omni Marina Hotel, Corpus Christi. Breakfast seating is limited to 800, therefore we will not accept phone reservations. Tickets are \$17 and will be issued according to the first reservation forms/payments we receive. An order form is found on page 23 of this newsletter.

“We are excited to have a person of integrity, courage, discernment and vision as Phil Lineberger. He has a special gift for

articulating his keen insight of the changing Baptist landscape. Texas Baptists need to hear him.” said David Currie, coordinator of TBC.

Lineberger is a native of Texas, graduated from University of Arkansas and earned his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been the pastor of churches in Little Rock, Arkansas, Wichita, Kansas, and Richardson, Texas, before going to FBC Tyler. In 1995 he came to Williams Trace Baptist Church in Sugarland as pastor.

He is a member of the executive board of the BGCT and former president of the BGCT. Lineberger and his wife, Becky, have two children: Kathy and Amy who is married to Brian Seay.

## How to End the Baptist Battles

*By James Denison,  
Pastor, Park Cities Baptist Church,  
Dallas*

This has been a wonderful weekend. Following the remarkable addresses we've heard, I feel a bit like the flea in the Russian parable who rode into town on the nose of the ox and proclaimed, “We've been plowing.” Said another way, I feel like a lion in a den of Daniels. These have been good days.

This morning I am assigned the subject of change. Often, change is a very good thing. For instance, in the summer of 1900,

- There were 8,000 cars in the United States, and 144 miles of paved roads; the maximum speed limit in most cities was ten mph.

- The average life expectancy in America was 47 years.

- Only 14% of American homes had a bathtub; only 8% had a telephone.

- Only 6% of all Americans had graduated from high school.

Change is often a good thing. I prepared my address on a device my father did not

live long enough ever to use. And change is an inevitable thing. Heraclitus was right: we really cannot step into the same river twice.

At the same time, certain essentials of faith and experience must not change. Just as Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so must the central affirmations of our theology remain faithful to the biblical revelation and our faith heritage.

This morning we must ask about change as it relates to that revelation and heritage. What has changed with Southern Baptists? Are these changes biblical and consistent with our faith heritage? Why do the answers matter?

Here is my title: how to end the Baptist battles. I truly believe that recent events have given us the answer we need.

### ***I. The history of our faith confessions***

From our earliest days, those in the Judeo-Christian tradition have affirmed

faith confessions. For instance, when the lawyer asked Jesus to choose among the 613 commandments of the Hebrew Scriptures the most important, he instantly spoke that confession of faith which the Jewish people had recited across the centuries of their history: “The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one’” (Mark 9.29). Then, on this foundation, he told us to love God with all

*Continued on Page 2...*

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***“Focus on Jesus” Rallies are coming***  
Texas Baptists Committed is sponsoring over 15 “Focus on Jesus” rallies across the state from September 14 to October 19. Details on page 5.

our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

The Jewish people typically recited this shema each morning and evening, and during the Sabbath services and festivals of faith as well. They cherished it as their confession of faith.

As you know, the Christian community soon developed their own confession of faith: Iesou Kuriou, "Jesus is Lord." We find it on the walls of Roman catacombs, and as the central statement of Christian baptism across twenty centuries.

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## **A document which elevates such a human statement of faith to this level of authority cannot be understood to be Baptist.**

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Confessions of faith are not new to the Jewish people or to Christian tradition. Nor are they new to Baptist faith and practice, although it is noteworthy that the Southern Baptist Convention existed longer without a confession of faith than with one. Here's the history of The Baptist Faith and Message, in brief.

In 1920 the Foreign Mission Board presented a Statement of Beliefs to the Convention in its report, asking all missionaries to affirm it.

In response, two years later the Northern and Southern Baptist Conventions met to discuss the possibility of issuing a joint confession of faith, the first in the history of the SBC. But the idea was rejected.

Interest in such a statement of beliefs would not die, however. In 1924 the Convention rejected a call for a binding doctrinal statement, but put a committee in place to consider a Baptist Faith and Message. E.Y. Mullins chaired the committee.

Mullins' committee essentially adapted the 1833 New Hampshire Confession, itself based on the Philadelphia Confession of 1742, which in turn had roots in the Second London Confession of 1677. This 1833 New Hampshire Confession was the statement of faith adopted by Southwestern Seminary at its founding in 1908.

This 1925 Confession stated bluntly, "Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience," and mandated that it was not "to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life" (*SBC Annual, 1925, 76*).

This statement was further revised in 1963 by the committee chaired by Dr. Herschel Hobbs. One of the committee's chief concerns was to provide "safeguards of the individual conscience in the interpretation

of Scripture." To the article on Scripture they added the statement, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." And because of increasingly heated racial issues they added to the article on man a statement which concludes, "every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love."

The statement combined the 1925s 25 articles into 17, but made clear its hermeneutical and ecclesiastical foundations with these two sentences, both omitted by the recent Convention in Orlando.

These statements are crucial, and form the crux of my concerns this morning. First, "The sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ, whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures." And second, "Such statements [as the Baptist Faith and Message] have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority."

Dr. Hobbs said that if these parts of the statement "be denied or ignored, then the statement becomes a creed" (*The Baptist Faith and Message, 12*). And so we wonder why they were omitted. The answer is illuminating, and crucial.

## **II. This is not a Baptist statement of faith**

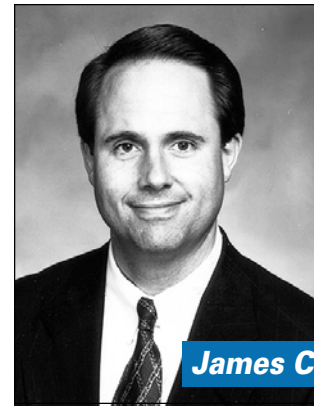
Here's why they were left out: the new Baptist Faith and Message is not a Baptist Faith and Message. At least not as Baptists have historically understood themselves, their faith, and their message. Here's the evidence.

Review **first** the authority of the new Baptist Faith and Message.

Listen to these words, never before a part of any Baptist faith statement: "Baptist churches, associations and general bodies have adopted confessions of faith as a witness to the world, and as instruments of doctrinal accountability. We are not embarrassed to state before the world that these are doctrines we hold precious and as essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice" (*paragraph 15*).

For the first time, the denominational faith statement is intended to be an "instrument of doctrinal accountability." For whom? By whom? Now we understand the exclusion of the statement, "Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority."

And for the first time, this faith statement is said to be "essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice." Essential for what? For whom? Perhaps this sentence explains the exclusion of the 1963 state-



**TBC  
Convocation  
remarks  
July 15,  
2000**

**James C. Denison**

ment, "The sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ, whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures."

Simply put, a document which elevates such a human statement of faith to this level of authority cannot be understood to be Baptist. And those who affirm it cannot be understood to be historic Baptists.

**Second**, let's review the hermeneutics central to the document.

Our 1963 statement of faith said, "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." The new statement says, "All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation."

Now, for the first time, Baptists are to interpret Scripture without the Christological hermeneutic which has characterized our theological history. One of the interpretive principles we inherited from our Anabaptist forefathers made clear the fact that the New Testament interprets the Old, and the statements of Jesus are the means by which we interpret the rest of God's inspired word.

A document which abandons the Christological principle of biblical interpretation cannot be understood to be Baptist. And those who affirm it cannot be understood to be historic Baptists.

**Third**, let's review the ecclesiology found in the new document. For the first time in Baptist history we have this statement, "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture" (*section 6*). However, Baptists have always championed the principle of local church autonomy. We have made clear the fact that a local congregation can do exactly as it pleases in seeking and following God's will.

Nowhere is this freedom more crucial than in the matter of pastoral selection and leadership. Make no mistake—this has never been done in the history of Baptist confessions of faith.

Simply put, a document which intrudes upon local church autonomy in such a restrictive manner as this cannot be under-

stood to be Baptist. And those who affirm it cannot be understood to be historic Baptists.

### **III. The significance of this document**

Now, what are the implications of this departure from historic Baptist principles of authority, ecclesiology, and interpretation? And of the larger controversy it represents?

**First**, this theological document will be normative and formative for the next generation of Southern Baptists. The SBC now has a new set of criteria for current and future denominational employees. Dr. Al Mohler was clear about this in Orlando: "To accept employment is to accept the terms of employment." Our colleagues and friends in Southern Baptist seminaries and missions agencies will be required to affirm this new, non-Baptist document. These changes will be foundational to the future of the Southern Baptist Convention, its theology and its faith practices.

**Second**, this issue and the larger controversy it represents have created a massive obstacle to effective ministry and missions. Last September a marketing and focus research firm employed by Park Cities Baptist Church conducted focus group research for us in the north Dallas community. Nine different groups, selected scientifically, were interviewed. None contained individuals currently attending a church anywhere.

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### **Let us move beyond the Baptist battles by being Baptist together.**

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One of the areas analyzed dealt with these persons' views of various denominations. The groups were asked about five denominations: Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Church of Christ, relative to a number of descriptive words. The groups ranked the denominations by these words.

Here are the words for which Baptists came in first: "pushy," "self-serving," "cliquish," "discriminates," "fundamentalist," and "hateful." For each of these words Baptists came in next to last: "loving," "diversified," "open-minded," and "modern."

This secular marketing firm came to a clear conclusion: the greatest single impediment to our church's ability to communicate the gospel in our culture is the fact that we are a "Baptist" church. How ironic: a denomination formed to obey the Great Commission is now our church's greatest

obstacle to its fulfillment.

**Last**, this controversy will continue and will move closer to home than ever before. SBC leaders have promised to inundate Texas Baptist churches with tapes and literature heralding their positions and caricaturing ours. Associations and local churches will be pressured to take sides.

In the recent edition of the *Southern Baptist Texan*, Jerry Sutton, one of the leading spokesmen for the new SBC, states, "There is a major movement to entrench moderates and liberals in the religion departments of state Baptist schools. If they can't subvert seminary students, they will go a step backward and subvert college students. In time conservatives in each state, by necessity, will have to organize and challenge those moves for the sake of the next generation" (*Southern Baptist Texan*, July/August 2000, 24).

This controversy, even though it is hindering our efforts to reach our lost communities and world, will continue unless we find a new way to address it.

### **Conclusions**

So, how do we end the Baptist battles? First, we understand that the Southern Baptist Convention is now a different denomination theologically. It has adopted a statement of faith which departs from historic Baptist views of authority, hermeneutics, and ecclesiology. In short, the SBC is no longer Baptist as Baptists have traditionally defined themselves.

I am making no personal accusations this morning. I do not know if the architects of this new document intend such a departure from historic Baptist theology or not, though I can guess. I do not know if the messengers who overwhelmingly affirmed this non-Baptist document intended to leave historic Baptist theology or not, though I can guess.

The new statement does not in my mind mean that the SBC is a "bad" denomination, filled with "bad" people. I am grateful for every person the SBC can win to Christ, and for every good thing they can do for God's Kingdom. I am grateful for my Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic sisters and brothers as well. Like them, the SBC is not a "bad" denomination, but it is no longer who we are theologically. It is not in my mind a Baptist denomination. And this change is crucial, and very personal to me.

You see, I first heard the gospel because Southern Baptists empowered businessmen Tony McGrady and Julian Unger to be ministers as they knocked on my apartment door and invited me to ride their bus to church in Houston, Texas. I heard the gospel because a local, autonomous Baptist church was free to attempt a ministry many other churches had ridiculed or rejected.

I came to faith in Christ because my Southern Baptist female Sunday school teacher pastored me and led me to Jesus. I chose to stay a Southern Baptist because I became convinced that our principles came closer to the New Testament than any other denominational model.

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### **A document which abandons the Christological principle of biblical interpretation cannot be understood to be Baptist.**

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I still believe that every word of the Scriptures is the word of God. Further, I believe that the word of God I hold this morning is the word of God. Not just the original autographs, which we do not possess, but the translations which we do.

In other words, I am who I was, but the SBC is not what it was. They have moved from me, not I from them. They have moved from us, not we from them.

Second, we claim our heritage and identity as Texas Baptists. Now we know who the SBC is, and will be. And we know who we are. We are Baptists. Texas Baptists.

Texas Baptists believe in biblical, non-creedal authority for our faith. Texas Baptists believe in a Christ-centered message and hermeneutic. Texas Baptists believe in local church autonomy and freedom for ministry and mission.

So now we must be Texas Baptists, together. We must move beyond the Baptist battles by being historic Baptists. Let us exercise our freedom and autonomy to preach Christ, not creed. Let us move beyond the bitter rancor, the name-calling and slander, the internal, myopic focus produced by twenty years of controversy.

Let us link hands and hearts in a new day to join the Spirit in his new work of this new century and era. Let us move beyond the Baptist battles by being Baptist together, for the sake of a world desperate for the hope of the gospel. For the sake of those who are where I was, waiting for the good news of God's love. We can end the Baptist battles in Texas by being Texas Baptists.

Shakespeare was right:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men which,  
Taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.  
Omitted, all the voyages of our lives are  
bound  
In shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current while it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.*

Let's end the Baptist wars in Texas by being Texas Baptists, to the glory of God.



# BGCT study committee will propose major changes in seminary funding

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS—A Texas Baptist committee studying theological education will recommend that the Baptist General Convention of Texas dramatically change the way it funds Southern Baptist Convention and BGCT seminaries.

If enacted, the proposal could be “the most dramatic thing undertaken by any state Baptist convention,” said BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade.

The funding changes are based on detailed research done by the 16-member committee since March, including on-site visits to the six SBC seminaries and extensive dialogues with the president, administrators and some trustees of each school.

## On-Site Visits

The last-minute campus visits were required, committee Chairman Bob Campbell explained, because the six seminary presidents rejected an invitation to meet with the committee in Dallas.

On the heels of that whirlwind tour of the six SBC seminaries, Campbell presented a preliminary report to the BGCT Administrative Committee Sept. 8 during its deliberations over a BGCT budget for 2001.

Due to the load of information under consideration and the lack of a final report from the theological education study committee, the Administrative Committee postponed final decisions about a 2001 budget until Wednesday, Sept. 13.

Several proposals for reallocating BGCT Cooperative Program money that traditionally has been sent to the SBC were put on the agenda during the Sept. 8 meeting, but the Administrative Committee chose not to finalize any budget recommendation until it receives the theological education study committee’s final report.

Moderates within the BGCT have been calling for the state convention to stop sending millions of dollars in undesignated gifts to the SBC every year. These calls are based in theological and political differences that have divided moderate and conservative Southern Baptists since 1979. Texas Baptists particularly have been critical of changes at the SBC seminaries, Executive

Committee and Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The theological education study committee is scheduled to finalize its report during a Sept. 11 meeting. The full report will not become public, however, until presented to the BGCT Executive Board Sept. 26.

## Funding Recommendation

Campbell reported, however, that the study committee will recommend that of the \$5.3 million currently sent to the SBC seminaries, a maximum of \$1 million be set aside to fund those seminaries next year. This funding would be granted based on the number of Texas Baptist students attending each seminary.

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## The study committee will recommend that of the \$5.3 million currently sent to the SBC seminaries, a maximum of \$1 million be set aside to fund those seminaries next year.

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A “Texas student” would be defined as someone who has been a member for the previous two years of a church that financially supports the BGCT. Students attending college outside Texas would be eligible based upon membership in a BGCT-supporting church prior to entering college.

The net effect of this change would be a virtual defunding of five of the six SBC schools, which currently receive anywhere from \$443,000 to \$1.5 million annually from the BGCT. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, based in Fort Worth, would get the largest share of the \$1 million pool because it currently enrolls about 1,400 of the estimated 1,600 Texas students attending SBC seminaries.

Even so, Southwestern’s funding would be reduced from \$1.5 million to an esti-

mated \$875,000 in 2001.

The committee will further recommend that the remaining \$4.3 million—which actually could be less if some churches respond by changing their giving options—be distributed in student grants and special project funds to Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene and Hispanic Baptist Theological School in San Antonio.

In the larger context of budget deliberations, however, the Administrative Committee discussed a number of Texas missions priorities they would like to fund from some source. These include Hispanic church starts, church health resources, child-care ministries and adoption services.

The Administrative Committee will decide during its Sept. 13 meeting how to respond to these needs and how to implement the recommendations of the theological education study committee.

Another study committee is looking at mission-sending agencies, including the SBC’s International Mission Board and North American Mission Board as well as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. That committee has met with IMB and CBF representatives but will not meet with NAMB officials until Sept. 12, Wade reported.

No mention was made of reducing funding to the IMB.

Campbell said the theological education committee’s report will highlight issues such as requiring faculty members to sign the revised Baptist Faith & Message statement, a high rate of turnover in faculty in several of the seminaries, a high percentage of faculty from non-Southern Baptist backgrounds in some seminaries, the use of Cooperative Program funds to create undergraduate colleges at the seminaries, lack of diversity on the seminary trustee boards, a pattern of trustees interfering with the routine work of faculty and staff, trustees creating political litmus tests for faculty hiring and lack of diversity in chapel speakers.

Also, the committee found “a great deal of mistreatment of people” by seminary administrators and trustees, added Michael Chancellor, vice chairman of the study committee.

## Findings Highlighted

- **required signing of 2000 BF&M**
- **high rate of faculty turnover**
- **high percentage of faculty from non-southern baptist backgrounds**
- **mistreatment of people**

“People in the church I serve hold certain expectations about Christian conduct” that have not been exemplified at the SBC seminaries, he said. “It’s not about beliefs. It’s about the way as Christians we treat other people.”

Despite this, the in-person conversations between the BGCT representatives and SBC seminary officials were cordial and Christian, Campbell said. “We were received graciously by every school.”

Contrary to some reports that have circulated, the Texas committee did not have its mind made up before visiting the SBC schools, Campbell said.

After doing its work, the committee struggled with a desire to treat some of the SBC seminaries differently than others—Southwestern, for example, because of its location and Texas heritage—but finally realized it could not do so. The six SBC seminary presidents specifically asked the committee to treat all the schools the same.

“The six seminaries chose to stand as one. That was their choice,” Campbell said.

He told the Administrative Committee that leaders from more than one seminary begged the committee not to give their school more favorable treatment than other SBC schools. The result would be to hurt those schools rather than help them, he said.

The process was painful for committee members, particularly those who are graduates of Southwestern or have known of its historic ties to the BGCT, Campbell said.

In the end, however, “Southwestern should be treated equally because the things we found are equally true,” he said.

Southwestern is “a changed school,” Campbell said. “The Southwestern I was trained in does not exist anymore.

“Are there still some good professors there? Absolutely. Are they as free as they used to be? No.”

The hard truth, Campbell said, is that Southwestern’s faculty members “can’t criticize the Baptist Faith & Message. If I can’t criticize this man-made document, I’ve made this document inerrant. That’s creedal. And that’s a big thing for us.”

Requiring faculty affirmation of the 1998 and 2000 revisions to the Baptist Faith & Message presents serious problems for faculty at all six SBC seminaries, Campbell said.

He cited a comment by New Orleans Seminary President Chuck Kelley that no faculty member would be allowed to question the Baptist Faith & Message anywhere at anytime, not even in private conversation at an off-campus party.

## 1963 BF&M accused of Neo-Orthodoxy

Further, four of the SBC seminary presidents told the committee they believe the 1963 version of the Baptist Faith & Message is a “neo-orthodox document,” Campbell said. “We had never heard that before. This is an alarming description.”

Campbell said the committee responded by asking: “Do you know who you’re calling neo-orthodox? All the presidents of the state conventions.”

The 1963 Baptist Faith & Message committee was comprised of the presidents of the state Baptist conventions, with Southern Baptist statesman Herschel Hobbs of Oklahoma as chairman.

Further, the seminary presidents told the Texas committee that Hobbs was “duped” by neo-orthodox individuals who heavily influenced the 1963 document, Campbell said.

The committee’s findings provide clear evidence that the SBC seminaries have moved from the theology, polity and ethic embraced by Texas Baptists, Campbell said.

He noted that Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, had

appealed to Texas Baptists to keep supporting SBC causes because Texans have been given so much. “To whom much is given, much is required,” Chapman quoted from the Bible.

“That’s right,” Campbell said. “Texas Baptists have been given very much. And we’ve been willing to share it. The SBC should also realize the six seminaries have been given much by Texas Baptists and under God we believe much was required in return.

“But they abandoned the requirements, and our report reflects that.”

## Study Committee worthy of Support

By Bill Spencer, Tri-Chair

Those who support the BGCT should come to the annual meeting of the BGCT, October 30-31, in Corpus Christi to express their support of the theological education study committee's recommendations.

The committee exhibited integrity and courage while conducting thorough research. Their recommendations offer Texas Baptists greater stewardship to be more effective in the work of the Kingdom of God. It is difficult for most Baptists to grasp the amount of change that has taken place in SBC seminaries. They are a shell of what they used to be.

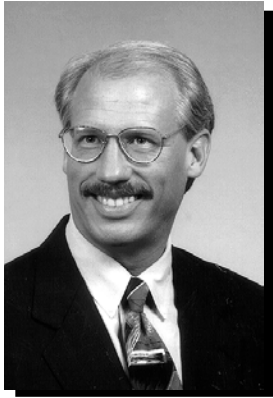
The claim that the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message was an expression of “neo-orthodoxy” should feel like a slap in the face to any traditional mainstream Southern Baptist. This is like the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the differences now found in SBC seminaries.

Mainstream Baptists who believe in historic Baptist principles must recognize the need for no longer supporting seminaries that have turned into fundamentalist institutions.

## “Focus on Jesus” rallies

More than 15 churches across Texas will host “Focus on Jesus” rallies that are sponsored by Texas Baptists Committed. Rallies will promote the vital ministries of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. They will consider how Baptists, before 1979, kept their focus on Jesus, how can churches cooperate with others now to keep the focus on Jesus and what this focus can mean to our future and the Baptist witness in America. A variety of Texas Baptist speakers will be featured. Watch your mail for rally dates and times or check our web site at [www.txbc.org](http://www.txbc.org) Please come and bring friends to rallies in your area!

# Beware Coercion Replacing Cooperation



**Charles C. McLaughlin,**  
**Associate**  
**Coordinator**

As a pastor for nearly 15 years, I cooperated with several associations in both rural and city settings. I participated in joint efforts with pastors and churches to birth a variety of ministries such as camps, retreats, evangelism rallies and training, counseling and social ministries.

In the rural setting the small number of churches made the felt need for others more acute. In all cases, the focus was on cooperative efforts to further the kingdom of God.

In each situation there were always some churches who were considered uncooperative. While there are several reasons churches do not cooperate, two reasons were particularly bothersome to other associational leaders.

One reason was that some churches (or leaders) were doing their own thing to the degree that they did not need or want anyone else.

A second reason was that some felt growing their church put them into competition with others, so they spent more energy castigating other churches (or leaders) than in promoting cooperation. Their bottom line was the numerical growth of their church, which came at the expense of the greater good that could be done through cooperation. This can happen when you get your kingdom confused with God's Kingdom.

Unfortunately, churches are competing with other churches in an organized way, this time for control of the local association. To some churches the growth of the Southern Baptist Convention's kingdom will be more important than the growth of God's Kingdom.

They will use the following methods in their attempts to assert control over their association.

## **1. They will practice coercion instead of cooperation**

Some associations in Texas have aligned with the 2000 revision of the Baptist Faith and Message as a basis for cooperation. In Oklahoma, a state strongly controlled by fundamentalists, the associational Directors of Missions (DOM's) walked lockstep with SBC leaders by passing a resolution firmly supporting the 2000 BF&M.

Even more, the DOM's "encourage the pastors and members of the churches to consider seriously adoption of the June 14, 2000 revision as their generally accepted confession of faith."

Do you feel this pressure that it's their way or the highway? In Oklahoma it appears to be that churches had better get in line with the program or suffer the consequences. It is coercion from the top down to conform using associations in an attempt to get to the local church.

Texas associations also feel the pressure of political pushing. It is not the conservative/moderates trying to force their theology on the association. There would be no fighting in associations if it were not for fundamentalists trying to have their way.

## **2. They will limit information to only what they want others to know**

Fundamentalist leaders and pastors will consider themselves to be the gatekeepers of information.

They will feed whoever is willing to swallow their rhetoric *Baptist Press* propaganda, the guilt by association tactics of Baptist Laymen's Associations and a variety of speculative rumors while cutting off lay people's access to *the Baptist Standard*, *Associated Baptist Press* and information from the BGCT regarding its stand on controversial issues.

They want to define the views of BGCT instead of letting the BGCT speak for itself.

Once people are taught to be prejudiced it becomes more difficult for them to accept the truth.

If you are a layperson who believes the BGCT supports homosexuality and abortion, then you have been manipulated with false information.

## **3. They will emphasize a narrow minded view of scripture and de-emphasize the practice of cooperation**

In the midst of a world with social, emotional and spiritual needs that can be better met through cooperation, they will choose to argue and create division over the Bible.

T.C. Pinckney, leader of the state fundamentalist convention in Virginia, summarized this view, "Scripture, not cooperation is primary."

While the world needs Jesus they will feel justified to argue about the Bible as though it belonged solely to them.

Many of them will champion the idea that if one does not believe the same as the 2000 BF&M, then that person is a liberal and not a Southern Baptist.

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## **There would be no fighting in associations if it were not for fundamentalists trying to have their way.**

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"When the messengers of the SBC enacted the current reading of the BFM what they were saying was: 'This is what Southern Baptists believe.' Thus, if one does not believe the things stated in the BFM they can NOT be a Southern Baptist (*caps in original quote*)." This idea is the view of many Baptists, but not historical traditional Southern Baptists. This is a quote from an independent fundamentalist Baptist, Dr. Devries. At least he is honest enough to say he is not a Southern Baptist. The truth is neither are the SBC leaders and what used to be our beloved denomination.

The SBC is an independent fundamentalist convention. Just ask Jerry Falwell. Associations will continue to feel the pressure from fundamentalists to move to the Southern Baptist of Texas while spreading misinformation about the BGCT. They have a proven track record of their willingness to split conventions, churches and associations.

Once we were cooperative, not perfect, but working together for the big picture, God's Kingdom. Now we argue. Who started this mess anyway?



## CO-CHAIR THOUGHTS FROM JOHN CASH SMITH

### *Budget changes should be for Kingdom's sake*



I am honored to be one of the three co-chairs of Texas Baptists Committed. As a layman and longtime TBC member (joined in 1992), I appreciate the steadfast commitment to Christ and Baptist principles that the Baptist General Convention of Texas and TBC members and staff have shown these last ten years.

Lay persons are a big part of TBC and the success it has had protecting the BGCT from fundamentalism. The state is full of educated and informed lay persons who have constantly remained committed to Christ and the Baptist way of life. They have helped keep their churches informed, resulting in many strong traditional Baptist churches committed to evangelism and missions.

It was an honor to serve as chairman of the BGCT administrative committee. The administrative committee helps develop the budget of the BGCT prior to its recommendation to the BGCT Executive Board.

### ***BGCT reaching others***

In this capacity, I learned a great deal about the institutions and agencies of the BGCT and their financial needs. As Texas Baptists, we are blessed with wonderful institutions doing important ministries. When a church gives to the ministries of the BGCT, it helps 38,000 neglected and dependent children through childcare homes at 18 locations; touches 32,000 students each year in one of our Texas Baptist universities; provides care for the elderly at five locations; assists the Rio Grande River Ministry; and helps many churches and God-called ministers in a variety of situational needs.

The BGCT has started 1,417 new churches in the last 5 years, 1,214 of these through the church starting center.

We have student ministries scattered across 104 Texas university campuses. propaganda The BGCT staff works hard to meet the real needs of Texas churches, from

mega-churches to small churches with bivocational pastors. Texas Baptist churches reach people from at least 45 national backgrounds. Our dedicated staff is there to help local churches with religious education, music, worship and even the design of new worship centers.

### ***BGCT meeting needs***

The BGCT provides counseling to ministers, seeks to help churches in turmoil and train individuals in personal evangelism. Through the Christian Life Commission, the BGCT seeks to assist churches and individuals deal with critical ethical issues and be good citizens, as well as help churches minister to families, singles and the aged. So many ministries are being done in Jesus' name with integrity and compassion.

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### ***The Kingdom test: Will this reallocation use God's money in a more effective way to spread the Kingdom of God?***

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The BGCT is uniquely blessed by God, yet, we truly need to do so much more. Texas' population is projected to reach 23 million in the next 10 years. We need hundreds of new churches on the Texas/Mexico border and in our cities

We have two BGCT-related seminaries, Truett at Baylor and Logsdon at Hardin-Simmons, that need significantly more funds.

The Hispanic Baptist Theological School needs funding for us to make an impact in reaching Hispanics.

Buckner's Benevolences does not have the funds for an adoption program or the needs that will escalate in the future. Unless we do more, many in our state will never come to know the saving power of Jesus Christ.

### ***Some punish BGCT***

That is why I am so sad that a few of our churches are stopping or reducing their support of the BGCT. What is especially sad is some seem to be doing it with an improper, unchristian motivation. I am reading of churches threatening to pull their support of the BGCT because we do not agree with the direction of the Southern

Baptist Convention.

I recently read of one Texas church that voted to stop all funds to the BGCT "if there is any further separation of the BGCT from the SBC." Notice they did not say they were going to stop funds to the BGCT because they did not like the institutions, agencies and ministries of the BGCT, but rather they were going to do it for punitive reasons, i.e., the BGCT doesn't relate to the SBC like they want it to, even though that church is free to give all it chooses to the SBC.

This is a punitive attitude, aimed at hurting Texas Baptists, not because the ministries of the BGCT are bad, not because the needs are not great, but because the BGCT leadership does not support SBC fundamentalism. How sad.

Friends, if you do not support the institutions, agencies and ministries of the BGCT do not give your money to them. But make that decision because you feel that your money is better used to spread God's Kingdom through some other channel than the BGCT. Do not stop funding to punish the BGCT, especially when you have the freedom to give as you choose. That is wrong.

### ***Necessary Change***

Should the BGCT recommend some changes in the way we partner with the SBC. The current administrative committee should make changes for the right reasons, such as believing the needs of Texas Baptists are so great, or the programs of the SBC are so flawed, that such action is warranted.

No reallocation of funds should be recommended unless that reallocation of funds passes the Kingdom test: *Will this reallocation use God's money in a more effective way to spread the Kingdom of God.* Any such recommendation should be clearly explained and detailed so that Texas Baptist pastors and lay persons understand clearly the Kingdom motivation.

The BGCT gives a church freedom to design their own giving plan. We must honor local church autonomy or we will not be truly Baptists. I expect significant changes to be recommended this year in how Texas Baptists partner with the SBC. I am excited about this possibility. I think the needs justify these changes as well as the non-Baptist direction of the SBC, especially the direction of their seminaries, *Baptist Press* and their ethics agency. But if such changes are recommended, I will only support them if they pass the Kingdom test. How about you?

# Texas Baptist leaders considering changes to denominational funding

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) — Texas Baptists last year gave three-and-a-half times more funds to the Southern Baptist Convention-owned Southern Baptist Theological Seminary than to their own George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University.

Southern Seminary, in Louisville, Ky., is located more than 600 miles from Texas, educates few Texans and teaches views at odds with many of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' conservative/moderate leaders. Those facts are prompting calls for the largest state affiliate of the SBC to change the way it allocates gifts to missions.

Rather than routinely channeling large amounts to SBC agencies that have taken a different theological and political turn than many Texas Baptists, some are now saying the money would be better spent on neglected ministries within the state.

The 2.7 million-member BGCT gave just over \$1 million to Southern Seminary in 1999 through the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget. That is 14 times the amount going to Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology, a second Texas school opened as an alternative to fundamentalist SBC seminaries.

Logsdon, in Abilene, and Truett, in Waco, together enrolled 302 students from Texas last year. Southern Seminary, meanwhile, enrolled 34. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth received about \$1.5 million from the Texas convention in 1999. Seminary officials said about 40 percent of the school's 4,000-plus students are Texans.

Several SBC entities are funded at higher levels than some high-profile state ministries. For example, the childcare ministry of Buckner Baptist Benevolences is perhaps Texas Baptists' best-known statewide ministry. Yet in 1999 the BGCT sent larger allocations to five SBC entities than it gave to Buckner childcare.

No Texas Baptist leader has been more outspoken on the practical side of this question than Ken Hall, a former pastor who now serves as president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences. The Buckner system provides child and family ministries to 25,000 clients each year, facilitates dozens of adoptions annually and serves 2,200 senior adults

through its retirement homes, assisted-living homes, nursing facilities and eldercare programs.

Running this statewide agency's varied ministries takes \$50 million per year. Of that amount, Buckner in 1999 received \$894,000 from the BGCT for childcare ministries, \$55,000 for ministries to the aging and nothing for adoption services.

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**Despite advocating a “pro-life” position in the abortion debates, Texas Baptists have done little to fund crisis-pregnancy centers and adoption ministries.** —Ken Hall

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“Texas Baptists have woefully underfunded the services to our Texas Baptist ministries to the poor and hurting people of our state,” Hall said. “When we give a comparable amount of money to Southern Baptist seminaries than we give to all of our human-service ministries, something is wrong.”

Despite advocating a “pro-life” position in the abortion debates, Texas Baptists have done little to fund crisis-pregnancy centers and adoption ministries, he added.

“One of the reasons so few girls can even consider adoption or being able to parent the child themselves is because abortion is the cheapest way to go,” Hall said. “It’s an economic decision.”

If Texas Baptists really aggressively chose to promote crisis-pregnancy centers through churches, through our Baptist institutions, many of these children who are pregnant, we can care for them.”

The needs for educating Texas ministers at Truett and Logsdon are equally great, according to the deans of those schools.

“We very much need additional dollar support,” said Vernon Davis, dean at Logsdon. “When we started this program, Hardin-Simmons as a whole had a massive deficit, \$12 million or \$13 million in our operating fund. That meant the university as a whole was experiencing some drastic

cutbacks. The way we started this program was really on a shoestring.”

For example, until this year Davis served as dean, faculty member and the theology school's only recruiter of students. Now Logsdon shares one recruiter who is responsible for bringing in students for all graduate programs at Hardin-Simmons. Other urgent needs include building an adequate theological library and providing proper student housing, he said.

Providing sufficient scholarship assistance for the education of one theology student for one year requires an endowment of \$100,000, noted Randall O'Brien, acting dean of Truett Seminary.

Endowment or some other form of funding for ministerial training is essential because “not many can come in and write a check or take out a loan for their ministerial education and then go pastor a small church,” he said.

O'Brien also noted that without such assistance, it becomes much more economically appealing for students to attend the six SBC seminaries, where tuition is heavily subsidized by Cooperative Program money.

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**Logsdon and Truett together enrolled 302 students from Texas last year. Southern Seminary, meanwhile, enrolled 34.**

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“We have more Texas students at Truett than Southern Seminary does,” he explained. “Yet we're sending funds out of state to educate residents of other states while our own are neglected. There's an opportunity right here at home. The need is great.”

Both O'Brien and Davis emphasized the uniqueness of the Texas Baptist seminaries as alternatives to the SBC seminaries.

“We believe theological education at Logsdon is clearly within the historic Baptist tradition that values things that seem to be at some risk in the (SBC's) current climate,” Davis said. “The other thing is we believe we can train ministers close to home for the task that's right here.”



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Despite these appeals for rethinking funding, Texas Baptists have made a commitment to the SBC they ought to keep, insisted Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, Tenn.

“From its inception, the Cooperative Program has been a partnership between the state conventions and the SBC for eliciting support from their common constituents, the churches,” he said.

Chapman warned that “anti-SBC” voices in Texas discouraging support of the national body are “unwarranted” and “threaten the long-standing partnership” between the two conventions.

## In 1999 the BGCT sent larger allocations to five SBC entities than it gave to Buckner childcare.

Chapman acknowledged the argument that Texas has a growing population in need of ministry. “But beyond the borders of Texas is a nation of more than 270 million and a world whose population is more than 6 billion souls,” he said. “It is crucial that all Southern Baptists do all we can, together, to reach that world. I believe mission-minded Southern Baptists in Texas and all the states want to do that, together with their larger Southern Baptist family.”

Despite possible appearances to the contrary, the call for budget changes in Texas is not an anti-missions or Texas-only perspective, countered Hall, president of Buckner.

“We’ve got great institutions we ought to be proud of,” Hall said. “But the fact is we don’t support them the way we should.” “Do Texas Baptist people really believe the (SBC) Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission needs Texas money more to lobby in Washington than (we do) to meet the needs of broken lives and families in Texas?”

I really believe God has given us the responsibility of educating our preachers and church staff members in Texas. How many of our students are going to go to Southeastern Seminary? They’re not. They’re going to go to Truett, to Logsdon, to Southwestern.

“The issue for me is not taking it away from Southern Baptists to give it to Texas Baptists. The issue for me is prioritizing our mission giving.”

# Jesus is the standard by which we interpret Scripture



**Executive  
Director  
BGCT  
Executive  
Board**

**Charles Wade**

## Reprinted from *The Baptist Standard*

Last week, I set forth the concerns I have about the new Baptist Faith & Message being used as a creed to control and manage the thinking of Baptists. Now, I want to express another concern that is even more significant to all Baptists who understand we are Christians first.

There is, of course, a high view of Jesus in the 2000 BF&M. The section on God the Son is almost identical to the 1963 BF&M. Both statements conclude with this sentence about Jesus, “He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.”

But if Jesus is Lord, and he is, why intentionally remove him from being the “Lord of Scripture”? In the article on Scripture, the final sentence in the 1963 BF&M reads, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.” Criterion means “a rule or standard for making a judgment.” Thus to say Jesus Christ is the criterion is to say he is the guiding principle, the standard, the benchmark by which the Scriptures are interpreted and understood.

## Why is this truth left out of the new BF&M?

In discussion at the convention, members of the committee who wrote the new statement made it sound as though those who wanted to reinsert that wonderful sentence were appealing for the right to attribute to Jesus any outlandish view or doctrine imaginable. That was unworthy of them and a deliberate attempt to distort the issue.

Simply said, the new BF&M removes Jesus from the exalted place as the one

who guides our interpretation of Scripture. Then, who or what takes his place? Does the confession of faith become the interpretive tool? Do the affirmations of denominational leaders become binding? Does the pastor become the criterion by which the Scriptures are to be interpreted? Do the linguistic and historical principles of biblical criticism become the criterion? I can hear someone say: “Let the Bible interpret itself. The words mean what they mean. Any reasonable person can interpret the Bible without any guidance.”

## But we do need guidance.

To know the mind of God, Christians believe we need the Scriptures, which faithfully and truly record what God has done in history and reveal his heart to us all. We need the Holy Spirit to guide us as we prayerfully read the text of Scripture. We profit greatly from Bible teachers and the community of faith as they share their understanding of Scripture with us. And we need the insight and wisdom, the example and passion of Jesus to help us properly understand the book that is above every other book.

For example, when you come to the passages in the Old Testament regarding the Sabbath restrictions, you see in the Gospels how Jesus gives guidance. “Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath ... For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath ... The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12,10, Mark 2:27). Jesus did not do away with Old Testament Scripture, but he did reinterpret it.

There are many other examples. Look at Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount, especially Matthew 5:17-48. Note his remarks concerning the Temple (Matthew 12:6), and his attitude toward children and women (Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 10:38-42, John 4:1-42, Galatians 3:28).

To see Jesus as the essential standard by which we interpret Scripture recognizes his sovereign authority over all things. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3). Jesus is the word, and he is both the author and the criterion of Scripture.

# The Baptist Faith and Practice



**Bill Hendricks**

**Bill Hendricks is former professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University.**

*Excerpts from speech delivered at TBC annual convocation, July 14th, 2000.*

In recent years, much has been said and written about the Baptist Faith & Message and the recent changes made in that historical, confessional document. Little has been said about Baptist faith & practice. What we do overshadows what we say.

The text for these remarks in Proverbs 22:38: “Remove not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.” This is the penultimate riches; that we should train children in the way they should go (according to their capacities); that we should not rob the poor; and that we should avoid angry and furious people.” Mainstream Baptists have shied away from this text because of J. R. Graves’ faux pas in reading history. Historical successionism is not the intent of the passage. Recovery of the heritage and care for interpreting the tradition is the point.

I have often shaken my head in dismay and wondered where we have gone wrong. One facetious answer leads me to say it is the fault of Vacation Bible School. In the 1940s, when VBS and I were young, we taught primaries (elementary school children) to sing action choruses. The purpose was not necessarily to praise God or to instill Christian virtue. The purpose was to use up their energy so they would sit still for the Bible story. Two examples come to mind:

“I may never march in the infantry, shoot the artillery, ride in the cavalry; I may never fly over Germany, but I’m in the Lord’s army!” and

“The B-I-B-L-E, yes, that’s the book for me. I stand alone (accompanied by vigorous stomping) on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E!”

Such lyrics and actions stuck because we have grown a generation of fighters and Bible stompers. We should have stayed with “climb, climb up Sunshine Mountain.”

I want to use the text of Graves with the substance of E.Y. Mullins to reflect on recent changes in the Baptist Faith & Message and current practice among some Baptists.

Edgar Young Mullins has recently been revived, vilified, misinterpreted, and, in some quarters, staunchly defended. Mullins, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, pointed out six axioms of religion, which are landmarks that need to be set firmly at the boundaries of the Baptist family today.

Some have questioned whether Mullins is orthodox because he stressed religious experience and soul competency. Mullins gave his own authority statement in clear and simple terms:

*“But we speak of making experience explicit in expounding the*

*doctrines of Christianity, we are by no means adopting that as the sole criterion of truth. He would be a very unwise man who should attempt to deduce all Christian doctrine from his own subjective experience. As we shall soon see, Christianity is a historical religion. Jesus Christ is its sole founder and supreme authority as the revealer of God. The Scriptures are our only source of authoritative information about Christ and his earthly career. These are fundamental to any correct understanding of our religion.”*

Baptists did not become who they were until the 1970s by downplaying soul competency or religious experience.

In the minds of Mullins and Herschel Hobbs, who is being dragged into current discussions for purpose of lining up experts, soul competency and religious experience had nothing to do with enlightenment individualism. And all of the pettifogging that is going on under the buzzwords of “enlightenment autonomy” via “secular humanism” should stop. Enlightenment autonomy and secular humanism are not our landmarks, and we should resist the attempt to clutter up the Baptist landscape with these rocks.

## **The Theological Landmark**

***“The Holy and Righteous God has a right to be sovereign”***

Mullins’ first landmark is theological. “The Holy and Righteous God has a right to be sovereign,” (I am quoting from BWA records in F. Townley Lord’s “Baptist World Fellowship”: 1955, p. 8). The Baptist Faith & Message says, “(He) God is all powerful, all loving, and all wise.”

The Nicene Confession states, “I believe in one God, and the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth ... “ (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom: 1877*, II, 58). The sovereignty of God is the bedrock of Christian theology. The problem arises when that mark is moved to the 16th century and interpreted in a cultural worldview that reflects the absolutism of French kings.

The situation is compounded today in an age of political absolutism, which gives the impression of the loss of personal freedom and human responsibility.

God is holy. Holiness includes both love and power. Powerful theological voices in our day assert that God’s love is determinative of God’s power.

John Calvin in the 16th century made God’s power determinative of God’s love. The landmark of God’s power as creator is not in question. The interpretation of God’s use of that power is at the center of differences in the Baptist family. The practice which arises from a commitment to God’s sovereignty should be a humble acknowledgment of our status as creatures. God is God. No person is God’s infallible, inerrant, inexorable, inquisitorial interpreter. No one!

## **The Religious Landmark**

***“All men have an equal right to direct access to God.”***

Soul competency or the priesthood of the believer was to have been excised from the amended BF&M this year. Fortunately, it was not. What has not been noted sufficiently is that the intended

omission of this necessary Baptist landmark was tied directly to a certain view of the sovereignty of God and the power of the pastor. There is a definite irony that Mullins' admittedly anti-Catholic comments are resurfacing today in the charges of Southern Seminary president that Catholicism is a cult and a false church. Mullins was content to point out the logical inconsistencies between Baptist beliefs and the practice of the Roman church. He did not find it necessary to make overt value judgments about ancient forms of Christian belief that preceded the historical rise of Baptists. But there is a further irony, an irony of practice among some Baptist leaders whose actions are as hierarchical as any Roman curia.

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## **No person is God's infallible, inerrant, inexorable, inquisitorial interpreter.**

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What is important to Baptists is the baptism of believers. There is a way of acknowledging the reality of Christian experience that comes after catechism and confirmation. Baptists have consistently said this order of baptism before conversion is not normative according to our understanding of Scripture. The priesthood of the believer is held by most Christians. It is the genius of the Baptist witness along with others, that we affirm belief before baptism. The practice which grows from this second landmark should be the witness of faith before baptism. It should not be an exclusivism which denies salvation to others who confess the Lordship of Christ.

### **The Churchly Landmark** *"All believers have equal privileges in the church."*

This is a radical statement. The changes made to the BF&M in 1998 and 2000 are the crux of the divisions among us. The "gracious submission" of wives to husbands and the specific denial of the possibility of women as senior pastors are violations of this landmark.

Equal privileges are equal privileges. Granted, Mullins did not have gender equality and feminine ordination in mind. Nevertheless, this principle can and should be extended into the home and the pulpit.

Titus and 1 Timothy have been used to obfuscate the issue of women's ordination. The author said that men seeking the office of bishop should be blameless. Biblical literalists cannot have it both ways.

I have been assured that Paul did not mean blameless or perfect. How, then, do we know that he meant men? One can pit Galatians against the pastoral epistles ad infinitum. The issue should not be resolved by prooftexts. The larger context of Scripture and the Christological principle of interpreting Scripture must be brought to bear.

If all men (and if "men" is a generic term for human which most would grant except in the matter of women's ordination) have equal privileges in the church, the privilege of teaching children—boys and girls—in Bible study is not intrinsically different from teaching/preaching to women and men in church.

As to the tenuous issue of ordination, certain facts bear remembering. The Old Testament speaks of patriarchal blessing and of prophetic anointing; but there is nothing in Hebrew Scriptures

analogous to contemporary practices of ordination. Jesus refers to himself as pastor. He only is our true pastor, shepherd and bishop of our souls.

The practice that should emerge concerning ordination is that Baptists should candidly and freely acknowledge that ordination and offices of ministry as practiced among us today have arisen from our history and traditions.

There is no such thing as a senior pastor, a minister of education or specialized ministries of music and childhood education in Scripture. All of these and the job descriptions which have proliferated around them are matters of history, tradition and culture. There is something faintly amusing about an 84-year-old deacon introducing a 24-year-old as his senior pastor.

There are certain customs emerging among us that have sinister implications. Not the least of these is the growing trend to call into being boards of elders committed to promote the pastor by circumventing deacons. Traditionally, in Baptist circles, "pastor," "elder" and "bishop" have been considered synonyms and refer to ordained leadership.

A second less-than-admirable reason for reserving the offices of pastor for men is the tax breaks and cultural privileges accorded that office, including the double-dipping of real estate interest and housing allowance in matter of income tax.

There is a third reason that hordes of protest are raised against women as pastors. Those women who are pastors, and many who would like to be, are so effective and efficient as to pose a threat to male ministers. Mullins was right. "All believers have equal privileges in the church."

### **The Moral Landmark** *"To be responsible, man must be free."*

Mullins' commentary sentence for this axiom makes it clear that he is thinking of freedom from creedal and hierarchical authority. The contemporary issue of practice is the creedal and coercive use of the BF&M.

In contradiction to the clear statements in the preface of the document the BF&M with all of its recent changes and, presumably, all future changes is expected to be a requirement for employment in all SBC agencies. This makes the confession both a religious creed and a secular condition of employment.

The doctrinaire attitude requiring uniformity of agreement is a hierarchical form of coercion. To say, "If you do not like the BF&M as amended both recently and as to be amended in the future, you cannot work for us" is a creedal requirement alien to our Baptist heritage.

It is conceivable that this coercion of conscience may lead to inauthentic signatories as well as to instances of mental reservation. Given this litmus test of conformity, can anyone still take seriously the preamble, which states: "Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience." The practice is not in keeping with the profession.

### **The Landmark of Social Relationships** *"Love your neighbor as yourself."*

Article XV of the Baptist Faith & Message adds four substantive issues. It is a Baptist landmark, shared by most Christian groups, that Christians should "oppose all forms of sexual immorality."

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Is that general statement not enough? Or if one is going to list the “sexual sins” of adultery, homosexuality, and pornography, why not expand the roster to include pedophilia, sexual inversion and incest?

The point is does the document, as amended, give any sympathetic hearing as to what constitutes sexual morality/immorality? Do the changes make it easy to define who is the neighbor and under what conditions one might love the neighbor?

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## **How many segments of the human community must we alienate before we find it impossible to witness effectively to all of our society?**

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In a pluralistic culture, must we not hear divergent views before singling out specific deviations of human sexuality? How many segments of the human community must we alienate before we find it impossible to witness effectively to all of our society?

The additions to article XV address many important social issues. Is there a way to address these issues in a positive way, leaving room for the persuasive power of the Holy Spirit and the winsome example of Christly love?

## **The Landmark of a Free Church in a Free State**

Mullins’ sixth and final landmark is “a free church in a free state.” Issues of the separation of church and state have always been a Baptist distinction. It is to be noted, with approval, that the 2000 BF&M left this article in its 1925 and 1963 forms.

There is, however, a growing disparity between Baptist confession and Baptist practice at a crucial point. “The church should not resort to civil power to carry on its work. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion.” These sentences frame the wall of separation of church and state.

The crucial issue for Baptists today is how these statements are to be interpreted and applied. There are Baptist voices that read the term “state” as applying primarily to federal government. These advocates suggest that if state or local governments, especially those in which Baptists or Chris-

tians are in a vast majority, it is permissible for tax-supported agencies to favor a Baptist/Christian perspective. Federal courts that deny the right of local governments and their agencies to permit or foster favoritist positions are vilified.

Other Baptist voices request a stringent separation of church and state and recognize the rights of all minorities not to be overwhelmed by a predominate majority position. They are torn as to where to draw the line between civil religion, popular culture, historical precedence and a strong view of separation of church and state as required by article XVII of the BF&M. This landmark seems to be, like the glaciers, in motion. I predict it will be one of the most controversial issues to confront Baptists who seek to understand, maintain and apply their heritage.

## **The Towering Landmark**

Some buildings stand out as identifying symbols above their urban landscapes. For example, the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco, the Sears Tower in Chicago or the World Trade Center in New York City. The lordship of Jesus Christ is the towering landmark on our Baptist landscape. This landmark is being redefined by recent changes in the BF&M.

The crucial sentence, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ” has been dropped. In its place is added, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ who is himself the focus of divine revelation.”

The shift of emphasis from a Christological principle of interpretation to an assertion that Christ is the focus of the Bible is seismic. Behind the 1963 statement is the reformation principle, long affirmed by Baptists, “Christ is King and Lord of Scripture. Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God, is One with the Father, and is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” To remove the living Christ as the touchstone for interpreting the Scripture is to downgrade Christ and promote bibliolatry.

Moreover, I was horrified to hear one of the four primary framers of the 2000 BF&M say on nationwide television that Jesus submitted himself to the word of God (read Bible). The debate concerned the ordination of women pastors. The issue was poorly taken.

The New Testament was not written in Jesus’ day. Such a statement was robbing Jesus to pay Paul, not an unknown phenomenon in current Baptist disagreements. Jesus submitted (a favored verb of the new BF&M) only to God. While respecting the

law and the prophets, he felt free to reinterpret them and to point out where they were being misused by the religious leaders of his day.

In the light of this change, the old Baptist battle cry becomes especially relevant: “No Creed but Christ.”

Another Christological shift and the application of it occurs in the article on the church (VI). The new version reads that the church is to be “governed by his

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## **To remove Christ for interpreting the Scripture is to downgrade Christ and promote bibliolatry.**

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(Christ’s) laws.” The 1963 version stated that the church is “to be committed to his (Christ’s) teachings.” This shift represents a stronger attitude toward legalistic submission rather than a reverential relationship to Jesus’ message.

## **Conclusion**

My text was Proverbs 22:28, supplying the analogy of landmarks to Baptist beliefs. The reference was to an independent Baptist minister’s (J. R. Graves’) desire to make Baptists exclusive and exclusivistic. There are currently heirs who eschew Graves’ view of history while wanting to affirm his exclusivistic attitude. The landmarks chosen through which to explore the recent changes in the BF&M were the six proposed by E.Y. Mullins in the 1905 address at the inaugural meeting of the Baptist World Alliance, a group that has increasingly become inclusive.

The particular slant to this address has been that our confession should be accompanied by a practice (usage) that both preserves the past and gives Baptists opportunity to minister most effectively in the present.

So far, all has been conservative and descriptive. I would like to close with a question that is future-oriented and provocative:

Remembering with appreciation those things that are past, is it time to look to the future in this new millennium by drafting a new confession which is appreciative of the past and its landmarks, which confession will state our doctrinal convictions in contemporary language and give clear indication as to what difference these doctrines make in the practice of our daily living? Just asking!

# Proof? Look at twisted words, trampled reputations



**Writer,  
Lubbock  
Avalanche-  
Journal**

**Beth Pratt**

No one was more surprised than I to find my young pastor's remarks the focus of attention in June at the Southern Baptist Convention, which met in Orlando.

The Rev. Anthony Sisemore spoke against one of the changes in a statement of faith called The Baptist Faith & Message.

A member of the group that rewrote the document jumped on Sisemore's comments with a vengeance, taking one remark totally out of context as "proof" that those who oppose the changes do not believe the Bible.

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**They saw their trust badly abused, their pastor attacked and a prevailing attitude of arrogance displayed.**

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It is proof, all right.

At least it was for the nine other folks who attended from the Floydada church, a small-town congregation struggling with the details of rebuilding after a massive fire.

The proof these church members found was in how today's fundamentalist Southern Baptist leaders twist words and trample reputations, a 20-year strategy that brought them into total control of the convention 10 years ago.

It was not the disagreement over the language in the document that rankled the Floydada group. It was the attitude they encountered from the platform and from those around them who actually jeered Sisemore's legitimate concerns.

Reluctant until then — and rightly so — to believe that the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention would engage in such cynical and perverse behavior, these

## Perspective from a Member from FBC Floydada

folks had their eyes opened. They came home with heavy hearts.

They are grieved because they have been invested in the world-wide mission programs funded by the denomination's Cooperative Program. Trust is the basis of that cooperative effort. They saw their trust badly abused, their pastor attacked and a prevailing attitude of arrogance displayed.

One couple, about as conservative in the true sense of conservatism as anyone you will ever meet, have a daughter and son-in-law preparing for the mission field. They are stunned at the cavalier way that doctrinal changes were made in the Baptist Faith & Message document.

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**Disagreement is one thing, but deliberately misrepresenting what your opponent has said is a tactic used when your defense is weak. Lying by omission is no less a lie.**

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Churches cannot be coerced to adopt this revised document. But what about their son-in-law?

Will he be forced to sign that document as a condition of employment with the denomination's mission-sending agency?

Yes he will.

In Southern Baptist circles, church contributions and church associations with other groups are entirely voluntary, the decision of the local church. I don't see that changing. Churches will do what they will do, mine included. So will individual members.

Some will channel their offerings through the state to groups other than the SBC, as they are allowed to do by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, conduit for the portion of Cooperative Program funds that go to the SBC.

Others will continue to send their contributions through standard denominational channels.

Messengers from local churches, voting on the state budget, tell the Baptist General

Convention of Texas what percentage of Cooperative Program contri-

butions is sent on to the national convention. Whether that will change remains to be seen. The BGCT meets this year in late October at Corpus Christi.

Sisemore's remark, "... the Bible is still just a book," has been touted as an example of so-called moderates' disregard for the Bible. Nonsense. It was lifted out of the context of preceding remarks that the Bible is a book that we can trust. "The Bible is a book that points toward the Truth ... Jesus Christ redeems us, not a book."

Disagreement is one thing, but deliberately misrepresenting what your opponent has said is a tactic used when your defense is weak. Lying by omission is no less a lie.

Even when it is done on the floor of the convention by a seminary president who isolates a single phrase, giving it his own sinister spin. The shame is that the majority bought into it.

But then, this kind of "us vs. them" political spin-doctoring has gone on so long in the Southern Baptist Convention that many of the younger preachers don't know anything else.

That is what happens when you follow a political model to gain power. Sisemore, who has no ties to any of the "moderate" groups, has no ambition to be in the spotlight, whether on a convention floor or as a member of the elite "super-church" pastors controlling the convention. He had told his congregation before the convention that he had no right to complain if he did not attend to make his concerns known.

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**The proof these church members found was in how today's fundamentalist Southern Baptist leaders twist words and trample reputations.**

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The concern was a shift in the revised document that he believes elevates the Bible to an object of worship. Yes, the fundamentalists have won the "battle for the Bible."

# BAPTIST PRESS: A CASE-STUDY OF UNETHICAL JOURNALISM

By David R. Currie, Coordinator

During the debate on the Baptist Faith and Message statement at the June Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Texas pastor Anthony Sisemore urged the SBC to keep language saying “the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.”

“Without any hesitation, I believe the Bible is God’s word, and I strive to obey the standards it prescribes,” Sisemore said. “The Bible is a book that we can trust. The Bible is a book that points toward the truth. With that being said, the Bible is still just a book. Christians are supposed to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Living Word, not a book. Jesus Christ redeems, not a book.”

Now read Sisemore’s statement again. Do you see heresy there? Is he saying anything wrong? Is he saying the Bible is not special or not the Written Word of God? Is he saying the Bible is not authoritative? No. He affirms the authority of scripture. The Bible tells us about God but it is not God. Jesus was God in the flesh, the full and complete revelation of God and it is Jesus that saves us.

How did *Baptist Press* report Sisemore’s statement? On June 21, BP released a story that began, “. . . the Bible is just a book.” As those words resonated through the Orlando, Fla., convention center June 14, thousands of shocked Baptists responded with audible gasps. For fundamentalists, it was a moment of truth. The 20-year battle for the spiritual heart of the SBC had just been exposed in six words.

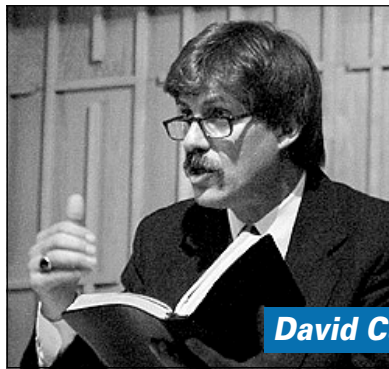
## Propaganda or Journalism?

BP tied the moderate movement to the statement, “the Bible is just a book” and gave God credit. They quoted Jerry Sutton saying, “The moderates really do believe the Bible is just another book.” Sutton said he believes that God used the statement to expose the moderates. “God brings truth out of confusion,” he said. “God allowed the moderate crowd, some of whom were confused, to expose what they really believed. Out of the confusion of their emotions, He brought out the truth.”

BP, under the direction of SBC leadership, did a hatchet job on Sisemore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Floydada, Texas. They twisted his words and told the world that Sisemore was a heretic who did not believe the Bible.

What BP did was unethical, unchristian, unbiblical and immoral. The sad thing is, they have been doing this for years.

One can learn how aggressive BP is in attacking the Baptist General Convention of Texas, CBF, TBC and the mainstream movement by going to the SBC web site at



David Currie

www.sbc.net. Click on BP and go to the archives. At keyword search, type in David Currie. *Baptist Press* has issued eight stories mentioning me since May 1. The articles are written as propaganda attacks on Texas Baptists, CBF or TBC. This kind of “slander journalism” is consistent with their work the past 10 years.

In 1990, BP staffers Al Shackleford, who recently was killed in an automobile accident, and Dan Martin, were fired by the SBC Executive Committee for truthfully reporting the scandalous tactics of fundamentalist leadership. Since that day, BP has not practiced the ethics of a nonpartisan news agency.

Since the CBF formation in 1991, BP has followed consistently the “Big Lie” philosophy. That philosophy, used by Adolph Hitler, was that if you told a lie strongly enough and forcefully enough, long enough, people would believe it. BP has, since 1991, erroneously portrayed CBF as liberal Baptists who do not believe the Bible, and who support homosexuality and abortion. They have been successful in this effort. CBF has only 1,800 contributing churches out of 41,000 in the SBC.

Fundamentalists won most of the SBC presidential elections in the 1980s with only slightly more than 50 percent of the vote. Thousands of Baptists resisted fundamentalism in the 1980s, yet have never joined CBF. I believe this is due in large measure, to the tremendously effective propaganda campaign waged by BP and SBC leadership against CBF.

## Mainstream organizations are about resisting fundamentalism and stopping its spread to state conventions.

This explains why people say, “I appreciate Texas Baptists Committed and support the BGCT but I’m just not comfortable with CBF.” When I point out that CBF and the BGCT stand for the same historic Baptists principles, I usually hear, “Do you really think so?”

SBC leaders have attacked state conventions through BP but have not been as successful in taking control of state Baptist conventions. This is certainly the case in Texas and Virginia, where fundamentalists have formed rival state conventions. They have failed also to be successful in many other states.

SBC fundamentalist leaders have tried consistently to tie state resistance mainstream movements like TBC to CBF. The strategy is to discredit them and convince Baptists that mainstream organizations are composed primarily of liberal, non-Bible believing Baptists. It is not true of CBF nor mainstream organizations.

True, many mainstream supporters like me, have been active also in CBF, as a way of expressing our support of historic Baptist principles nationally. Our involvement in CBF is a different issue than our involvement in TBC or any other mainstream organization.

Mainstream organizations are committed to keeping state conventions open, inclusive and united around Jesus and missions. Mainstream organizations are about resisting fundamentalism and stopping its



spread to state conventions. CBF is about missions, theological education and helping churches.

## Overview of Baptist Press

SBC leaders have used *BP* to attack the truth that CBF and mainstream organizations are separate. Events in Texas, coupled with formation of mainstream Baptists-Committed-type organizations in several states, seem to have led SBC leaders to a state of paranoid fear.

A brief overview of the *BP* in the last three months reveals that *BP* is practicing hatchet journalism and Hitler's big lie philosophy. The past three months provide a glimpse of what *BP* has been doing the past 10 years.

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**"I believe the fundamentals of the faith: the virgin birth of Christ, that Christ lived a sinless life, that Christ died for our sins, was literally raised from the dead and is coming again. Everyone I know believes those things."**  
— David Currie

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In April, enthusiasm was expressed for the mainstream movement in a national meeting when 100 representatives from 15 states gathered in Atlanta. Eight states now have mainstream organizations. SBC leaders, fearful that other mainstream groups might have the success of Texas Baptists Committed, responded to this meeting using their big lie strategy.

*BP* released a news story May 4, titled "Dissident Baptists with CBF ties establish new 'mainstream' network." The opening paragraph reads, "A group of dissident Southern Baptists with ties to the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship have formed a 'Network of mainstream Baptists' to prevent churches and state conventions from following the conservative renewal of the Southern Baptist Convention over the past two decades."

This article was written by Todd Starnes of *BP* who interviewed me. Starnes did not report that I said, "I believe the fundamentals of the faith: the virgin birth of Christ, that Christ lived a sinless life, that Christ died for our sins, was literally raised from

the dead and is coming again. Everyone I know believes those things." He did accurately report that I said, "fundamentalism is a perversion of the Gospel...I am talking about the movement. That's the perversion...Fundamentalism is focused on power and control."

*BP* did allow James Merritt, now SBC president, to say he did not understand what I meant by fundamentalist. They quoted Merritt saying, "If they mean it's someone who believes the Bible is the Word of God, that Jesus was born of a virgin, that Jesus died on a cross and was literally raised from the dead, then quite frankly, I believe that Baptists are guilty of being fundamentalists." I agree with Merritt. Most Baptists are conservative, thus, the label moderate is inaccurate.

Not satisfied, on May 15, *BP* ran another article titled, "Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is busy organizing, strategizing, networking." In this article, they used their big lie philosophy saying mainstream organizations were "political front groups that are providing tactical cover for the CBF at the state Baptist convention level by opposing conservative candidates for office and encouraging Southern Baptist churches to distance themselves from the national convention."

The five-page *BP* article cited Moran's guilt by association material tying the mainstream/Baptists Committed organizations to CBF. It was the big lie philosophy carried to the extreme as they used every conceivable connection they could think of to link the groups.

## TBC Formed Prior to CBF

Chronological events in history reveal the weakness of *BP* fabrications. Texas Baptists Committed could not have been formed to lead Texas Baptists into the CBF. TBC was organized in 1989, two years before CBF's formation. How could we be a front group for an organization that did not yet exist?

TBC was organized in 1989 as part of the national effort to stop fundamentalist takeover of the SBC. After the national effort was abandoned, TBC leadership choose to continue because Paige Patterson had pledged to take over the BGCT, *The Baptist Standard*, and Baylor University. TBC remained active to fight to keep Texas Baptists free.

Other states, which also had Baptists Committed state organizations, closed their

organizations. Years later, after seeing the success of TBC and watching the fundamentalist movement turn its attention to taking over state conventions, these states are now reforming their mainstream/Baptists Committed organizations in hopes of saving their state convention. None is a front group for CBF.

Some CBF supporters are active in mainstream organizations and some are not. The mainstream movement is not about leading a state into CBF. Mainstream movements are about stopping the scorch and burn tactics of fundamentalism from succeeding in state conventions.

One month later, Charles Wade, executive director of the BGCT, went to Orlando and challenged SBC leadership from the convention floor.

Bruce Prescott, president of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists and I also spoke from the floor pleading with the SBC to leave the words, "the criterion by which we interpret scripture is Jesus Christ" in the BF&M statement. A *Time* magazine reporter who interviewed me asked, "how can a group of Baptists vote against Jesus?"

Wade courageously challenged fundamentalism and evidently enraged SBC leadership because they misrepresented Sisemore's words in their June 21 report.

Picking up on the big lie philosophy the article said, "The moment of truth for dissident moderates and their denomination-like Cooperative Baptist Fellowship came when Anthony Sisemore, . . . offered an amendment to the proposed Baptist Faith and Message when it came up for discussion. . . ."

*BP* called our office in hopes of tying Sisemore to TBC and CBF, but found out he was not even on our 19,000-plus mailing list. Later they interviewed Sisemore and found FBC Floydada gives 13% to the SBC Cooperative Program. The church does allow members to designate to CBF.

*(As a side note: Reporting the giving record of FBC Floydada to the Cooperative Program is ironic in that BP has never reported the giving record of newly-elected SBC president James Merritt. What they apparently do not want publicized is that it appears Merritt's church gives between 2 and 3 percent to Cooperative Program while he is bragging about how wonderful it is. Merritt was nominated by Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas. According to published records, Prestonwood managed to give \$275,550 to missions in 1998 out of \$22,470,098 in to-*

*...continued on page 16*

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tal receipts. That is 1.23 percent.)

Obviously, Sisemore was not saying that “the Bible is just a book” like *War and Peace* or *Tom Sawyer*, yet SBC leaders jumped on the opportunity to misrepresent Sisemore’s statement. They will use this lie over and over again attempting to destroy the BGCT, the mainstream/Baptists Committed movement and CBF.

Sutton even went so far as to say that former SBC leaders, “I’m talking about the heads of the agencies and many of our professors,” were on that same road, i.e., “the Bible is just a book,” thus claiming that men like Keith Parks, Russell Dilday, Paul Powell, Foy Valentine, Duke McCall, William Hendricks, Leon McBeth, William Estep, Buddy Shurdon and others were all men who believed “the Bible is just a book.”

To continue their big lie strategy *BP* released another story May 26 titled, “Texas moderates may leave SBC to form new, national Baptist group.”

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## **This is the old strategy that anyone who does not bow down to the SBC is accused of not believing the Bible.**

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Claude Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and chairman of the SBC executive committee was cited as saying that the issue for Texas Baptists is whether or not to remain a part of a convention that “believes the Bible is just a book,” referring to the BGCT.

Thomas also said, “it appears that from the (Orlando) convention discussion that some in leadership in the BGCT have a lower view of Scripture than our Southern Baptist forefathers.”

This is the old strategy that anyone who does not bow down to the SBC is accused of not believing the Bible.

## **BP’s Spin on CBF in Orlando**

By the June meeting of the CBF General Assembly in Orlando *BP* was known for lacking integrity. *BP* wants to convince others that TBC is an arm of CBF.

Why do they do this? One, they are scared other states may be able to do what we have done in Texas. Two, they think they have done such a good job slandering CBF through the years that if they can link us together, they can stop the mainstream

movement in individual states.

At the CBF General Assembly some mainstream state leaders lead a workshop about the relationship of mainstream organizations and CBF. The purpose of the workshop is to seek converts for the mainstream movement.

I asked if a *BP* reporter was present and a hand was raised. I asked if the reporter was Todd Starnes, who wrote three of the four articles described above. He said he was Russell Moore and when some of the crowd groaned, I said, “Don’t do that. He has a right to be here. He just needs to report this meeting accurately and not do the hatchet job his co-workers did on Anthony Sisemore.”

I said when you start a mainstream group you will have to deal with the lies and misrepresentations of *BP*. My remarks were not directed to him, but toward his bosses and fellow reporters.

In my speech I addressed how fundamentalism was hurting the Kingdom and how the world needs an authentic Baptist witness in the 21st Century. Participants were encouraged to stand up for Jesus and His message of love and grace just as Paul stood up to the Judaizers and Jesus to the legalists of His day.

Russell Moore reported my comments in the July 3 release of *BP* titled, “BGCT leader confirms ties between mainstream Baptist groups, CBF.” Currie spoke optimistically of moderates in the state conventions diverting money from the International Mission Board to other groups since “conservatives don’t care about missions They’re fighting a culture war.”

Notice how they said I spoke “optimistically” of moderates diverting money from the International Mission Board. That is not true. I never said such a thing. In fact, I said, “Texas Baptists will never abandon the missionaries,” but this statement was not reported. Nor did they report about the concerns expressed for our missionaries, especially in light of how the revised BF&M could be implemented to the harm of our missionaries.

In short, the article took my comments on one subject and twisted them to help their agenda. And what is their agenda? To label us as the anti-missionary group. They want people to believe moderates, whose churches mostly give 10% or more to co-operative missions, do not believe in missions.

This is typical of *BP*. They take statements and twist them to fit their purpose

and call this professional journalism. They did it throughout the CBF meeting.

They issued another press release saying “CBF to approve funding for pro-homosexual groups.” Is this true? No, once again, it is a fabrication. CBF does give something like \$9,000 out of a \$16.9 million budget to the Baptist Peace Fellowship for a specific race relations project.

CBF does not support the ordination of gays. That is one of the reasons why CBF funds a project of the Peace Fellowship and not its general budget.

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## **BP take statements and twist them to fit their purpose and call this professional journalism.**

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I have been chair of the CBF Finance Committee for two years and I can tell you unequivocally that CBF does not give one penny to support homosexuality. Reading *BP* reports on the CBF general assembly, you would think all CBF does is promote homosexuality and abortion when I never heard either issue mentioned. *BP* twisted Daniel Vestal’s message delivered at the General Assembly into an attack on SBC.

At CBF people were talking about missions and their desire to lead people to Christ. I heard about the importance of keeping Jesus Christ the focus of your life but I never heard a word about homosexuality or abortion.

After CBF ended, *BP* issued another story on July 5, this time accusing me of publicly rebuking their reporter, Russell Moore, and stirring the crowd to make negative remarks at Moore. They claimed someone cursed Moore and pushed him against a wall, even though they have no one who can validate his accusations. I did publicly criticize *BP* but I was very nice to Mr. Moore.

For the rest of July, *BP* turned their criticism to Missouri and the mainstream Missouri Baptist movement. As Russell Dilday traveled and spoke in Missouri, he and leaders of mainstream Missouri Baptists were subjected to the same hatchet journalism we have come to expect from *BP*. They called Dilday’s speeches, “anti-SBC rallies.”

On August 4, they issued a story titled, “Chapman addresses ‘anti-SBC spirit’ among some Texas Baptist leaders.” They mentioned that “Dilday, during a late-July speaking tour in Missouri in behalf of the anti-SBC ‘mainstream Missouri Baptists’ group, said Texas Baptists’ level of coop-

eration with — and the ‘amount of money forwarded ‘to the SBC may be reduced.’

Finally, on August 8, *BP* decided it was time to go back after me and Marv Knox, editor of *The Baptist Standard*. This story was titled “Baptist Standard editor’s endorsement evidences CBF leader’s sway in Texas.”

The story begins, “David Currie, who is at the forefront of a national anti-Southern Baptist Convention campaign, was lauded in a recent Texas *Baptist Standard* editorial for his group’s strategy in keeping the Baptist General Convention of Texas from going along with the Southern Baptist Convention’s ‘juggernaut to the right.’”

Using the big lie strategy they said I was “working in harmony with the CBF in creating opposition in Texas and elsewhere for traditional Southern Baptist missions and theology.” In reality I support traditional Baptist theology and historic Baptist principles.

## ***BP Knows Better***

Using guilt by association tactics they attacked me for serving on the board of The Interfaith Alliance, accusing me of supporting homosexuality and abortion, which is untrue. I have answered all that before and am as tired of answering it as you are reading about it.

*BP* and SBC leaders know that all these news stories mentioned above are slanted and lack integrity. They know guilt by association is wrong. They know these stories lack ethics and common Christian decency. What is sad is that they do not seem to care. What is even sadder is that what was once the most effective denomination in America is now led by people who present themselves to the world as mean, bitter and judgmental. It is disheartening that so many Baptists have put their trust in a press agency that lacks integrity as well as professionalism.

The true Baptist movement will survive and flourish despite the efforts of *BP*. Let us go forward with the same commitment to “freedom in Christ” that the Apostle Paul shared in his letters.

## **William Barclay warned of the dangers of legalism**

*Editor’s note: The following is an excerpt from William Barclay’s commentary on Galatians 5:1-12.*

It was Paul’s position that the way of grace and the way of law were mutually exclusive. The way of law makes salvation dependent on human achievement; the man who takes the way of grace simply casts himself and his sin upon the mercy of God. Paul went on to argue that if you accepted circumcision, that is to say, if you accepted one part of the law, logically you had to accept the whole law.

To Paul all that mattered was faith which works through love.

## **Reactions to revised BF&M from North Carolina**

*Editor’s Note: Excerpts printed from Biblical Recorder: Journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*

*By Steve DeVane, BR Managing Editor*

North Carolina Baptist churches are responding in various ways to revisions to the Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M).

Most reactions have been predictable with conservative/fundamentalist churches applauding the changes and moderate churches challenging them.

But not all reaction follows theological lines. At least one prominent conservative pastor has spoken publicly against one of the changes.

Joe B. Brown, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte and husband of Baptist State Convention 2nd Vice President Teresa Brown, spoke on the issue of women preachers in the church’s evening service June 18. The message can be heard over Hickory Grove’s Web site at: [www.hgbc.org/Sermons.asp](http://www.hgbc.org/Sermons.asp).

### **“I’ll bow down to King Jesus, but I will never bow down to King James.”**

Brown said the Bible does not say for women to “shut up.”

“If you say women can’t preach, you’ve got a problem,” he said. “You’ve got a problem with Scripture.”

Brown explained how women “prophesied” or preached in the Old Testament and New Testament.

He said the Bible teaches that in Christ there is neither male nor female.

“What God wants us to do is quit putting people in categories,” he said. Brown said he knows some people say that Jesus only called men as disciples. “If you take that kind of test, then you’ll say the only people that have authority in the kingdom of God then must be Jewish, Caucasian men,” he said. “I don’t think that’ll float anywhere.”

“You can use this Bible to beat people or you can use this Bible to encourage people,” he said. “I believe we should use it to encourage people.”

A western N.C. church with a pastor who preaches only from the King James Version of the Bible decided to stop sending money to the SBC because of the revisions. Charles Dean, pastor of East Sylva Baptist Church in Sylva, said his church voted to move its gifts to the Cooperative Program to Plan C, which forwards no money to the SBC.

“We said we’d prefer to be known as an old-time missionary Baptist church,” he said. “We didn’t leave the SBC. They left us.” The motion to change giving plans passed with only one dissenting vote, Dean said. About 250 people attended the meeting, he said. “I’ll bow down to King Jesus, but I will never bow down to King James,” he said.

That is just another way of saying that the essence of Christianity is not law but a personal relationship to Jesus Christ. The Christian’s faith is founded not on a book but on a person; its dynamic is not obedience to any law but love to Jesus Christ.

Once, the Galatians had known that, but now they were turning back to the law. “A little leaven,” said Paul, “leavens the whole lump.” For the Jew leaven nearly always stood for evil influence. What Paul is saying is, “This legalistic movement may not have gone very far yet, but you must root it out before it destroys your whole religion.”



# An Open Letter To Texas Baptists

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*Editor's note: The following is a letter sent to pastors and lay leaders in Texas Baptist churches. TBC discovered that some fundamentalist pastors did not share this material with their church leaders. If you have questions about the beliefs of the leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas then let them speak for themselves in this letter.*

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

These are exciting days for Texas Baptists. Our state's population is projected to reach 23 million within the next ten years, and Texas continues to grow increasingly multi-ethnic, urban and unchurched. Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, has set before us a compelling vision.

He has called on Texas Baptist churches to be the presence of Jesus in their communities. He has encouraged us to reach out in love with the Gospel to the disenfranchised and dispossessed. He has called on us to care about those like Zaccheus—materially prosperous people who are “up a tree” and “out on a limb” searching for spiritual meaning and for someone to care about them. He has challenged us to work together to “put our arms around Texas and hug this state up close to God.”

The vision can become reality, but obstacles must be overcome. Unfortunately, one of the great hindrances to our cooperative work as Texas Baptists is misinformation. Some individuals and organizations have attacked the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its leaders with untrue allegations. While we cannot judge their motivation for spreading these false accusations, we feel compelled to answer them with truth.

You may have received printed materials linking the Baptist General Convention of Texas to all sorts of positions contrary to the convictions of many Texas Baptists. These materials are filled with half-truths, innuendo, guilt by association and blatant misinformation. Bearing false witness against brothers and sisters in Christ is a serious transgression. Our purpose in writing you is to set the record straight about the BGCT.

## **The Elected And Employed Leaders Of The BGCT Believe The Bible Is Inspired, True And Trustworthy.**

In 1980 and again in 1999, the Baptist General Convention of Texas passed motions affirming *The Baptist Faith and Message*, as adopted in 1963 by the Southern Baptist Convention, as a guideline for doctrinal beliefs.

Regarding the Bible, *The Baptist Faith and Message* states: “*The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter.*”

Every Christian has the sacred privilege of interpreting the Bible. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture also aids believers in interpreting it. Our statement of faith says, “*The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.*”

That means Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, is the guide for interpreting the Written Word of God. The introduction to this confession of faith also makes it clear that “*the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.*”

In the statement of values for TEXAS 2000 as adopted by the BGCT in 1994, the first value listed is “*Biblical authority.*” Every priority of TEXAS 2000 has a clear Biblical basis that is listed by Scripture reference. The work of the BGCT is firmly rooted in the Bible. Our task is “*Putting God's Word to Work.*”

## **The BGCT Is Committed To The Bible As Our Only Creed.**

Texas Baptists refuse to treat any man-made statement of faith as authoritative over the conscience of believers or as a substitute for divinely inspired Scripture. The Baptist Faith and Message, as affirmed by the BGCT, states, “*Baptists emphasize the soul's competency before God, freedom in religion, and the priesthood of the believer.*”

Baptists historically have believed that we are accountable to God and to Holy Scripture, not to any confession of faith. Texas Baptists recognize that doctrine is important, truth is to be honored and Scripture is to be obeyed. To guard against error, we point to the whole Bible—not any incomplete statement of faith—as the “*Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over conscience.*” The preamble to *The Baptist Faith and Message* also states, “*A living faith must experience a growing understanding of truth and must be continually interpreted and related to the needs of each new generation.*”

Throughout their history Baptist bodies, both large and small, have issued statements of faith which comprise a consensus of their beliefs. Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as *official creeds having mandatory authority.*”

Baptists resist creedal faith because man-made creeds always are used eventually to coerce conscience. Texas Baptists have no creed but the Bible.

## **The BGCT Affirms Reverence For Human Life And Opposes Abortion.**

Six times since 1980, the BGCT in annual session has adopted resolutions opposing abortion, while consistently allowing for exceptions to save the life of the mother or in cases of rape or incest. In 1997, the convention also passed a motion specifically condemning the partial birth abortion procedure.

Abortion on demand is forbidden by the policies of all BGCT-affiliated hospitals. While the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission statement, “*Abortion and the Christian Life,*” is not an official policy statement adopted by the BGCT, it also clearly opposes abortion as birth control.

Critics have attacked the BGCT because some organizations and individuals with whom Baptists have worked have cooperated in programs or worked in coalitions with groups that do not share

our conviction regarding reverence for the life of the unborn.

Texas Baptists traditionally have recognized the wisdom of working for the common good in limited partnerships alongside those with whom we may disagree on some issues. A shared commitment on one issue does not mean agreement on all issues.

The BGCT position against abortion is clear. In both policy and practice, the BGCT affirms reverence for human life and opposes abortion.

## ***The BGCT Has Spoken Clearly And Acted Decisively In Opposing The Practice Of Homosexuality.***

As far back as 1982, the BGCT in annual session voted its conviction that *“the homosexual lifestyle is not normal or acceptable in God’s sight and is indeed called sin.”*

As recently as 1996, the convention adopted a report from its Messenger Seating Study Committee that stated: *“The Bible teaches that the ideal for sexual behavior is the marital union between husband and wife and that all other sexual relations—whether premarital, extramarital, or homosexual—are contrary to God’s purposes and thus sinful. Homosexual practice is therefore in conflict with the Bible.”*

Then in January 1998, the BGCT Administrative Committee learned that a church knowingly ordained a practicing homosexual as a deacon, and the church indicated on its web site it was affiliated with the BGCT.

At its meeting the next month, the BGCT Executive Board approved a recommendation from the Administrative Committee that the BGCT decline any financial contributions from that church. It also asked the church to remove the convention’s name from its web site and other materials.

Since the church made no attempt to send messengers to the state convention, that was the strongest action the BGCT could take, in keeping with Baptist polity. The Baptist General Convention of Texas affirms ministry in Jesus’ name to all people—including homosexuals, believing that forgiveness, restoration and transformation are available to all who repent.

As the 1998 Administrative Committee recommendation stated, *“We commend those churches who seek to minister to those who engage in homosexual behavior. We cannot, however, approve of churches endorsing homosexual practice as biblically legitimate.”*

## ***The BGCT Supports Religious Liberty.***

True to our heritage, Texas Baptists believe in the separation of church and state. As George W. Truett, Texas Baptist statesman and longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, said from the steps of the United States Capitol in 1920, *“Christ’s religion needs no prop of any kind from any worldly source, and to the degree that it is thus supported is a millstone hung about its neck.”*

Because we support a free church in a free state, Texas Baptists have supported the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The Baptist Joint Committee consistently has opposed those who have urged government-sponsored school prayer, tuition vouchers for parochial schools and state funding for Christian ministries.

The Baptist Joint Committee has been equally staunch in guarding the free exercise of religion, leading the way in securing passage of the Equal Access of 1984 and building a coalition of 68 religious and civil liberty organizations from the far right to the

far left which passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The political necessity of coalition-building has made the Baptist Joint Committee vulnerable to attack by its critics. Out of a shared concern for separation of church and state, the Baptist Joint Committee has worked on projects in cooperation with a wide variety of groups, from the conservative National Association of Evangelicals to the liberal People for the American Way.

Obviously, Christians must use good judgment and exercise wisdom in deciding which coalitions to join and which partners to work alongside. Without doubt, the Baptist Joint Committee has worked with some groups that support positions contrary to the convictions of most Texas Baptists.

However, as noted previously, Texas Baptists historically have put aside differences with others to work with them on matters of the greater public good. Texas Baptists have worked with Muslims and Mormons to fight legalized gambling, and no reasonable person could imply BGCT endorsement of their theology.

Last year, Texas Baptists were part of a statewide coalition composed of nearly every faith group in Texas, representatives from the Religious Right and from civil liberties groups. Together, they supported vital religious freedom legislation that was passed by Texas lawmakers.

Obviously, there were many issues on which they would disagree, but the coalition worked together out of a shared commitment to religious liberty.

By the same token, the Baptist Joint Committee’s willingness to work with a wide variety of groups on church-state issues does not imply a blanket endorsement of those groups on all issues.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas supports the Baptist Joint Committee because Texas Baptists believe in religious liberty and value the contribution that the Baptist Joint Committee has made to the protection of that liberty.

## ***The BGCT Believes In The Autonomy Of The Local Church.***

The BGCT does not ordain anyone, nor does the BGCT instruct churches as to qualifications for ordination as a deacon or minister of the Gospel. Texas Baptists traditionally have viewed ordination as strictly a local church issue.

Unless a church affiliated with the BGCT knowingly and willfully ordains someone living in open sin and publicly voices approval for that person’s lifestyle, the convention takes no action of any kind.

The convention has never presumed to tell a church that it could not ordain a woman as a deacon or minister. The BGCT does not dictate to a church whom that church should or should not call to serve as a pastor or staff member. The BGCT honors local church autonomy.

## ***The BGCT Believes In The Family As A Divinely Appointed Institution.***

Because of this commitment, the BGCT and its Christian Life Commission have trained hundreds of consultants and volunteers to work in local churches to help congregations develop ministries to families.

Some have criticized the BGCT for not affirming the language of the 1998 Southern Baptist Convention *“family”* amendment to

*the Baptist Faith and Message.*

Not all Texas Baptists interpret the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians the same way.

Some view “mutual submission” as the governing principle for family relations, and they base their positions on the Scripture. Others hold contrary positions, and they also cite the Bible as their source. Lack of agreement on the interpretation of one biblical passage does not diminish the Texas Baptist commitment to the institution of the family.

## The BGCT Will Continue To Work With Other Baptists Who Share Our Vision.

The BGCT has been accused of distancing itself from the Southern Baptist Convention. Texas Baptists affirm the principles that historically have identified Southern Baptists: commitment to the inspiration and authority of the Bible, soul competency, religious liberty and a cooperative approach to fulfilling the Great Commission and Great Commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Texas Baptists rejected the legalistic approach of Independent Fundamentalism more than 75 years ago, choosing instead to embrace those time-honored distinctive Baptist principles. The BGCT has not moved from that position.

Texas Baptists will continue to work with those who share a commitment to the historic Baptist vision, but the BGCT will

not act in violation of Baptist distinctives. We are heartbroken by strained relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ.

If attacks on the BGCT continue and churches are confused by false reports, what have we gained? We will have two separate but weakened conventions. We will have young leaders who choose to carry out their ministries outside of Baptist life because they want no part of the infighting.

We will offer a poor witness to a lost and dying state, and the cause of Christ will suffer. The BGCT is not perfect now, and it never has been. At the same time, we

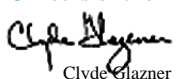


believe it has been and continues to be used by God to accomplish his work in Texas.

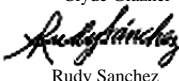
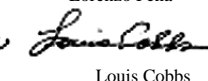
Because this work is so important and so obviously has been blessed by God, we cannot and will not allow false and misleading statements to go unchallenged.

We want every Texas Baptist to know what it means to be a Baptist and to unite around Christ, the Great Commission and our historic Baptist principles. Please join us in setting aside distractions and focusing on the task of sharing the message of God’s love with the people of Texas.

Yours in the bond of love,

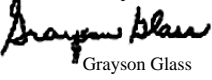
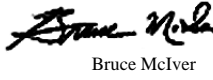
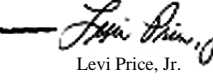

### Officers of the BGCT

    
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Rudy Sanchez      Louis Cobbs


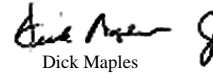
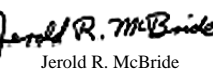
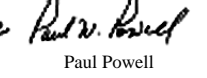
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Bob Campbell      Ernest Duncan      Lloyd Elder      Leroy Fenton

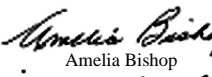


     
Grayson Glass      Bruce Melver      Levi Price, Jr.      Ed Rogers

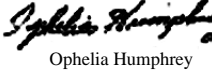
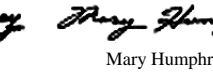

### Past Presidents of the BGCT

     
Jimmy R. Allen      Milton Cunningham      Russell Dilday      Phil Lineberger

     
D.L. Lowrie      Dick Maples      Jerold R. McBride      Paul Powell

### Past Presidents of Woman’s Missionary Union of Texas

    
Amelia Bishop      Gerry J. Duncan      Huis Coy Egge

    
Ophelia Humphrey      Mary Humphries      Maurice Johnston

## Truth is Stranger than Fiction

*Editor’s Note:* The following is from a Baptist Press story of Adrian Rogers sermon to the students at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary on August 22. As you consider the theology of his statement, remember that Rogers was the chairman of the Baptist Faith and Message study committee which recommended the revisions passed by the SBC in Orlando. Rogers is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., and former president of the SBC 1979-80 and 1986-1988.

“When a Christian sins, God has four steps he can take that person through, Rogers said:

1) **Conviction.** Conviction is a feeling of being dirty, along with a desire for cleansing. However, “If you’re living in sin and there’s no conviction, let me just tell you plainly, you need to get saved,” Rogers said. “If God’s hand is not heavy upon you, you are lost.” If a person does not get his life right with God because of conviction, then God uses a second step.

2) **Chastisement.** Chastisement can take a variety of forms, Rogers said, citing sickness, sorrow, failure and heartache. If

“God will kill you because you’re his child. If you’re living in sin and God kills you, you’d better thank God for it...”

—Adrian Rogers

after conviction and chastisement the Christian has not turned from his sin, Rogers said God uses a third step.

3) **Challenge.** “You don’t want to be there,” Rogers said. Usually a challenge “will come only one time,” from either a preacher, a family member, a tragedy or a sermon, “but God in some way will say, ‘You are the man’” who did something wrong, as the prophet Nathan told King David. If a Christian still has not repented after conviction, chastisement and challenge, Rogers said God brings about a fourth and final step.

4) **Consummation.** At this point, Rogers said, God is saying, “Something is going to be done about this” because if a person is truly a child of God he cannot continue in sin. “I’m telling you, there is a line that you cannot cross,” Rogers said. “God will kill you because you’re his child. If you’re living in sin and God kills you, you’d better thank God for it because if you’re living in sin and God doesn’t kill you, you’ve never been saved.”



# A FORMER MISSIONARY RESPONDS TO CRITICISM OF PARKS

Dean Dickens was a SBC missionary to the Philippines 16 years. Having served as pastor, missionary, and seminary



professor, he is a member of the CBF National Coordinating Council and of the TBC Executive Committee.

**Dean Dickens**

In reading that Dr. Keith Parks had agreed to share with a Missouri group his insight and experience about the SBC changes, I was both surprised and appreciative. Surprised because, although Keith knows the inside story on the SBC takeover, he usually speaks on the missionary passion that marks his life and fires his passions.

While I was pleasantly surprised at his candid and painful reflections on the “deceit . . . lying . . . (and) cheating” in the SBC takeover, I was staggered and disappointed, but not surprised at the response from Morris Chapman of the SBC Executive Committee.

## Those of us who know Keith know he is the consummate Christian gentleman.

Nashville responses did not refute what Parks said. Instead they shot the messenger. I have sat for two months on my concerns about this attack yet still feel a need to respond to Chapman’s uncharitable and unbiblical remarks. Why?

**First**, if anyone in this world has a well-founded reputation of being unpleasant in his dealings with people he disagrees with, it is anyone except Keith Parks. Having known, loved, and worked with him for 30 years, I have never heard of him being unpleasant or ungentlemanly to anyone let alone being bitter or disgruntled.

Those of us who know Keith know he is the consummate Christian gentleman. Chapman’s self-serving piety reminds one of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words: “The

**A response to Morris Chapman’s statement about Keith Parks, “Dr. Parks has a well-founded reputation of being unpleasant in his dealings with people he disagrees with, but in this case he is particularly intemperate in his remarks. It is sad when anyone determines that he can only build up his work by tearing down that of others. Disgruntlement and bitterness spoil a man’s spirit, jade his judgment and sometimes warp his integrity.”**

*Quote from May 22 Baptist Press article. Chapman is president of the SBC Executive Committee.*

more he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons.”

**Second**, Chapman expressed dismay that Parks would encourage people to support missions beyond the SBC Executive Committee’s definition of the Cooperative Program. A reviewing of CP history reveals it initially used funds from people who gave in other designated ways.

For Chapman to say Parks came to this conclusion of giving outside the CP only after finding new employers is sad, sadistic and scurrilous. Chapman knows that Parks no more looked for new employers than did Larry Baker (Christian Life Commission), Loyd Elder (Sunday School Board), Russell Dilday (Southwestern Seminary), Milton Ferguson (Midwestern Seminary), Al Shackelford and Dan Martin (*Baptist Press*) and others.

Parks delayed going with the fledgling CBF, who simply wanted to have a real fellowship, be real Baptists and cooperate in an ongoing worldwide missionary task.

Chapman used that same convoluted logic about Parks having been hired and salaried through CP.

(1) Keith Parks has never been for hire. I don’t recall Chapman ever having been attracted by the fantastic salary we Southern Baptist missionaries were privileged to receive. We were grateful for the privilege of serving. We were appreciative of support Southern Baptists offered. Chapman would do well to revise his insulting secular thinking.

(2) That massive \$20,000 annual field missionary salary for which Keith Parks was “hired” comes nowhere close to the huge salary Chapman and others at SBC seminaries and agencies have negotiated.

(3) Many don’t know that in Richmond and at CBF, Parks fought against getting more than a field missionary’s salary.

Nashville often wails that “CBF mis-

sion giving will cause our missionaries to be cut off and abandoned.” What SBC leaders don’t want Baptist laymen to know is the International Mission Board has on hand more than \$350 million in Invested Funds and an additional income of \$215 million.

Reported investments incomes are \$26 million. Neither Parks nor anyone begrudges IMB having hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars invested be-

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## “Cynicism is the intellectual cripple’s substitute for intelligence... the dishonest businessman’s substitute for conscience... the communicator’s substitute... for self-respect.”

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yond their regular budget funds. We are glad. Let’s not act as if CBF mission giving is going to harm mission finances.

Parks, in his Missouri address, also noted concern that SBC takeover methods were dishonest and unbiblical. He quietly mentioned he was forced out of Foreign Mission Board leadership. “Never one time did anyone try to accuse me of not believing the Bible.”

No, they did not and cannot. More important, Parks obeyed the Bible. We need more of that today from New Boston to Nashville.

If Nashville can’t heed the Holy Bible they told us they were anxious to defend, they might remember Russell Lynes’ worldly observation, “Cynicism is the intellectual cripple’s substitute for intelligence... the dishonest businessman’s substitute for conscience... the communicator’s substitute... for self-respect.” Nashville’s tune is a pathetic analysis.

# WHY BAPTIST HERITAGE?



Co-director,  
Baptist  
Heritage  
Council

**Becky Matheny**

*Editor's Note: Baptist Heritage Council is a mainstream/Baptist Committed type organization in Georgia.*

As I have taken on this new responsibility, many people have asked, "why do we need another Baptist organization in Georgia?" I have three responses:

## **The Giant is Sleeping**

Since 1996, the lay leadership of this state has steadily diminished, to be replaced by ministers. The Executive Committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) consists of 110 people. Today, only four of those are lay people. The heritage of our denomination rests soundly on a belief and dedication of the priesthood of the believer. As a believer and a Baptist, lay persons are called to serve in the leadership of our denomination. As it stands, we have abandoned this responsibility and handed the leadership to our ordained pastors.

The Baptist Heritage Council (BHC) is committed to reconnecting the laity to boards, agencies, committees, and churches that deal with the Baptist issues of our state. We want to awake the sleeping giant that is the laity of this state to the responsibility and the gift of serving God in this way. Lay people need the confidence and the support to struggle with issues and discuss them with one another without looking for someone who "has all the answers."

We have seen a systematic removal of the laity off most of our decision-making committees, and especially off anything that allows them to interpret "under God." This slaps the face of our Baptist Heritage.

## **Education is Essential**

Many issues that determine the path of the denomination are decided in committee. The local church is caught unaware at too many turns. The BHC strives to change

that. We need to be informed. To have a voice, we need to know what the issues are before they are adopted. To the end, the BHC will publish newsletters that target the issues, and detail the concerns. We will establish a speakers bureau of trained individuals around the state who will interpret to churches the issues crucial to Georgia Baptists.

We need a balanced voice with an ear to basic Baptist beliefs. The BHC will be that voice. Most of our churches are giving thousands of dollars to the GBC and the SBC, but they know not where the money is spent. The laity must have a voice! Through education, we will help you discover where your money is going and how it is being used.

## **Where have all the Baptists gone?**

In recent years, we have watched the SBC whittle away at cherished Baptist principles and doctrines to make way for a fundamentalist agenda. As Southern Baptists, we no longer affirm valued doctrines like priesthood of every believer, autonomy and Bible freedom. These have been removed to make way for the more non-Baptist doctrines of control, pastoral authority and a church polity that resembles Catholicism.

The Baptist Faith and Message statement that was changed in June now dictates that we are accountable to the church and others for our interpretation of the scriptures. Christ is no longer our criteria for interpreting scripture.

The autonomy of the local church has been removed in favor of a more "top-down" polity. The article on the church states that the church is autonomous, but in the same paragraph, it qualifies what the church can and cannot do with regard to calling a pastor. (*"While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men."*)

Webster's Dictionary gives the definition of autonomy as "self-governed," or "without outside control." Does that sound like autonomy? The church cannot be autonomous and at the same time be told how to function. The recent changes are clothed in the phrase autonomy, but bear the wolf of control underneath.

Soul competency, or priesthood of the believer, has been removed from our statement of faith. Historically, Baptists have put emphasis on this doctrine. It has been

based on the biblical affirmation that every human being is created in the image of God. Therefore, each individual is competent, under God to make spiritual and moral decisions. It is on the strongest tenants of our faith and denomination.

However, Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary and member of the 2000 BF&M committee said, "soul competency had a negative impact. The result was an autonomous individualism that has infected the SBC and now widespread has infected evangelism."

These are our roots-the very heart of who we are as Baptists. We must stand to preserve our heritage in Georgia, even when leaders tell us a different story. Why Baptist Heritage? Because I believe in the laity of this state. I believe they want these same things, and I believe they care enough about this state to make a difference for our children and grandchildren.

After the SBC in Orlando, my sixteen year-old came in after hearing the reports and said, "Mom, I don't think I want to be Baptist anymore. They are not like us." Baptist Heritage wants to change that for our children. We should not have to be ashamed of who we are as Baptists. We are Baptists. Let's stand up and let that be known.

TEXAS BAPTISTS COMMITTED  
P.O. BOX 3330, SAN ANGELO, TX 76902  
915-659-4102 • FAX 915-655-3603

[www.txbc.org](http://www.txbc.org)

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# I'M A NON-TEXAN WHO SUPPORTS TEXAS BAPTISTS COMMITTED

*By D. Perry Ginn, Retired Minister, Decatur, Georgia*

I'm not a Texan. I've been a Baptist pastor for 50+ years, but I've never even preached a sermon in Texas. But I am a strong supporter of Texas Baptists Committed.

I joined and support TBC because I am an "Honor Jesus First" fundamentalist - a fundamentalist, that is, written with a small "f."

I believe with no reservations the fundamentals of the Christian faith as Baptist folk have historically understood them. I believe in the divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice.

## Fundamentalists appear to focus more on political power and control than on missions and evangelism.

I believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His works of miracles and healing, His atoning death ("He died for me and in my place"), His bodily resurrection, and His living presence in my life and that of all other believers. I believe in and honor the full Lordship of Jesus Christ, that He is Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords, the One who alone is worthy.

I believe that He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. I also believe in an eternal Heaven and Hell.

I am NOT, however a Fundamentalist, that is, one with the capital "F." I respect individual Fundamentalists as brothers and sisters in the family of God. I am saddened, however, that their actions indicate that they are more interested in dominating Baptist life and in controlling what other Baptist Christians believe than in loving fellow Christians with the same kind of love Jesus demonstrated (and still demonstrates through the Holy Spirit).

It seems that Fundamentalists are more likely to ask, "What do you believe about the Bible?" rather than asking, "Do you trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?" They also tend to declare, "If you don't agree with me you're a liberal," in place of asking, "What would Jesus do?" Fundamentalists appear to focus more on political power and control than on missions and evangelism.

Most worrisome about capital "F" Fundamentalists, (like the

leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention who rammed through the recently approved Revised Baptist Faith and Message), is their creed-like concept of "doctrinal accountability" and their implied denigration of the full deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I support TBC because of the leadership the organization provides in assisting Baptists in all states affiliated with the SBC to understand why it is crucial to honor Jesus first and to stand firm against the control agenda of the new Baptist-type Fundamentalists (the capital "F" kind). TBC advocates resistance to any form of "mind control" by self-appointed SBC guardians who believe they alone know the mind of God and that they alone know how to interpret the Bible correctly.

If you are like me in honoring Jesus Christ as Lord above any and everything else, you should support Texas Baptists Committed.

If you believe like I do that Baptist people before 1979 were nearer to the true beliefs of the Christian faith than this new breed of control-oriented dogmatists, you should join TBC.

## With TBC you'll share in a crusade to honor Jesus first.

If you believe in and honor the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice just as Baptist folk have always done, then help TBC in its task. If you feel you are not a second-class Baptist because you don't happen to believe that Fundamentalists are the only ones who know what the Bible means, then join TBC.

They will provide you with reliable facts and information. With them you'll share in a crusade to honor Jesus first, find genuine Christian love (the agape type), warm acceptance, joyful fellowship and real freedom.

Join up with Texas Baptists Committed and you'll be working with Baptists who honor the full deity of Jesus Christ without dilution. With them you'll feel you really belong. That's my experience. So if you are an "honor Jesus first" kind of Baptist, I urge you to give TBC a try.

## TBC Breakfast Oct. 31, 7 a.m.

Only 800 seats are available for the TBC annual breakfast October 31. Send in this form with your check to secure your place. Tickets are \$17. The breakfast begins at 7:00 a.m. at the

Omni Marina Hotel, Corpus Christi. Phil Lineberger, pastor of Williams Trace Baptist Church, Sugarland, Texas, will be the speaker. Due to limited space, no phone reservations will be received. Reservations may also be made at the TBC website, [www.txbc.org](http://www.txbc.org). Please make your reservation as soon as possible.

### RESERVATION FORM

### TEXAS BAPTISTS COMMITTED ANNUAL BREAKFAST

**Omni Marina, Corpus Christi**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ tickets at \$17 per plate to the Texas Baptists Committed annual breakfast featuring Phil Lineberger on Tuesday, October 31, 2000 at the Omni Marina, Corpus Christi at 7 a.m. Return this form with your check to TBC, P.O. Box 3330, San Angelo, TX 76902-3330. (915-659-4102)



# Baptist Press ‘Moves Away From Fairness’

## Two news stories about the death of a journalist illustrate competing approaches to journalism

By Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

The *Baptist Press* story about Al Shackelford’s death in a car accident gave two short sentences to the emotional events surrounding his termination 10 years ago by the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee.

The *Associated Baptist Press* story on Shackelford’s death gave six paragraphs to his firing and that of Dan Martin, another Baptist journalist.

Following a dispute with one of the SBC’s leading fundamentalists, Shackelford and Martin were fired without cause in an unprecedented, closed-door meeting with armed guards. Shackelford later worked as a clerk at a Kroger store, earning \$4.60 an hour.

*Associated Baptist Press’* approach showed its commitment to the time-honored standard of “tell the truth and trust the people.” *Baptist Press*, the SBC’s official news agency, demonstrated its commitment to glossing over information unfavorable to Southern Baptist fundamentalism.

Never perfect, *Baptist Press* once strove for balance and accuracy. *BP* has increasingly speeded away from its historic commitment to fairness and truthfulness, becoming a highly partisan

publicity service.

Other stories illustrate *BP’s* shading of truthfulness and abandonment of fairness.

In April, *BP* issued a story with the headline “SBC World Hunger Gifts: Second-Highest Total in ’99.”

The SBC official responsible for hunger-concerns bragged, “God is working in marvelous ways to promote Southern Baptists to give selflessly.” He added, “The increased giving reveals that more and more Southern Baptists are gaining a passion for compassion regarding those who are less fortunate and hurting.”

What the story failed to mention was that the highest level of world hunger giving occurred in 1985, fifteen years earlier. The story did not point out that the 1999 level of giving was more than \$1 million behind the all-time record.

One wonders about the reason for the omission of relevant facts. Was it an effort to gloss over information that did not reflect positively on current SBC leadership or that would have reflected positively on moderate leadership in the 1980s?

Another *BP* story alleged that a *BP* reporter was pushed and cursed at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s 2000 General Assembly. The story provided no supporting evidence for the reporter’s charge. *BP* ignored the need for an additional witness to verify the reporter’s claim before printing the story.

*BP’s* plummeting standards raise questions about journalistic integrity. It also forces the question of why non-fundamentalist Baptist state convention papers continue to use *BP* as a source for news stories.

## 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.**

The TBC Newsletter is a periodical published and mailed six times a year to churches in Texas and to all Baptists Committed members and supporters. You may be on several lists. If you get two newsletters, please pass one along to a friend. Send Address changes to: P.O. Box 3330, San Angelo, Texas 76902-3330.

## Texas Baptists Committed

P.O. Box 3330

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# What's Behind *Baptist Press*' 'Lack of Objectivity'?

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*Editor's note:* Excerpts from an article by Baptist Center for Ethics explaining "Baptist Press' disregard for truthfulness and fairness." BCE suggests that *BP*'s slant may be taken from the journalistic approach of Marvin Olasky, editor of "World" magazine and professor of journalism at the University of Texas.

*By Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.*

In 1994, the SBC's Executive Committee held a seminar for conservative Southern Baptist reporters, where Olasky taught his concept of Bible-based journalism.

Mark Coppenger, then a SBC vice-president for public relations, organized the seminar. Several years later, he had Olasky deliver lectures at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Olasky's philosophy of journalism is based on his belief that the Bible is "the inerrant written Word of God" and that Christians are under attack.

Writing in *"Telling the Truth: How to Revitalize Christian Journalism,"* Olasky said biblical objectivity is a "commitment to proclaiming God's objective truth."

"The Christian journalistic goal... is true objectivity: presentation of the God's-eye view," Olasky wrote.

At one point, Olasky wrote, "Biblical objectivity means supporting the establishment and improvement of Bible-based education, and criticizing government schools, in the understanding that turning education over to 'professionals' who have no regard for God is an abdication of biblical parental responsibility."

"Christian reporters should give equal space to a variety of perspectives only when the Bible is unclear," he said.

For example, since the Bible is clear that abortion is wrong, news stories about abortion should be completely anti-abortion. When the Bible "is not clear" on issues, such as NAFTA, biblical objectivity should reflect "the biblical view, as best we can discern it through God's Word," he said.

Olasky wrote, "A solidly Christian news publication should not be balanced."

Olasky and others, who talk non-stop about objective truth, fail to understand how human sinfulness corrupts our perception. They underestimate the power of culture

and historical settings to shape how we read, interpret and apply biblical truth.

Like many Christians, Olasky does not acknowledge that his conservative worldview can disfigure his understanding of the Bible, just as a liberal worldview can distort comprehension of the Bible.

The lack of appreciation for the power of sin leads to an arrogance that jettisons fairness for the sake of ideology and permits untruthfulness for the sake of a political agenda.