

Transcript of Paige Patterson
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
President's report to the convention
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What on earth is happening at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary? To answer that, I need to take you on a little journey. We are with Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer on the Mississippi River. We are late for supper, and we know what Mama is going to say. So we take our little boat and come to the shore. Leaping off on the little platform we tie the boat too quickly and head for the dinner table. As soon as dinner is over, we make our way back to the pier, only to discover that the wind has loosened our knot and the boat has been set adrift. Where on earth will we find it? Shall we go downriver or upriver?

Well, of course, everybody in the world knows the answer to that: If the boat is adrift, it will never drift upriver. It will only drift downriver. Now it may drift down the left side of the bank in liberalism. It may drift down the center of the river in neo-orthodoxy. Or it may drift down the right side of the river in what is confessing conservatism but with an ecumenical flair. But make no mistake about it; it will drift down the river.

On the other hand, if you want to go upriver—and we want to do that—then you have to empower the boat. You either have to row it, or you must have a motor. We at Southwestern Seminary are delighted to be part of the Seminary armada of the Southern Baptist Convention: Six boats moving upriver against the tide, if you please.

We are moving upriver committed to the absolute lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are moving upriver committed to the inerrancy and sufficiency and the necessity of the Bible to order our faith and practice. We are going upriver against the tide with every energy we have to rescue the perishing who have fallen into the river, and the task fails unless we reach 7 billion lost people on the face of the globe. We are moving against the tide in order to establish family and gender roles as described in God's Word for the home and the family. We are moving upriver in order to teach our preachers and missionaries to be the greatest Bible teachers that we are capable of teaching.

Now, there have been some accusations made against Southwestern Seminary, and may I take just a moment to deal with those?

- “You folks at Southwestern Seminary are fundamentalists.” One half true: When my automobile breaks down, I always want a fundamentalist, not an experimentalist auto mechanic. The San Antonio Spurs will win, if they win—and some of us hope they do—because they have a fundamentalist basketball coach who emphasizes the fundamentals of playing the game. But our fundamentalism is a fundamentalism of commitment to the fundamentals of God's Word, and not to legalism, which will kill as sure as liberalism will.

- Some people say, “You Southwesterners are forbidding speaking in tongues.” The Bible says, “Don’t forbid to speak in tongues.” Therefore, because I am a biblicist, I don’t forbid anybody to speak in tongues. Public presentation of tongues must be regulated by the extensive rules found in 1 Corinthians 14, and what you do in your private prayer life, frankly, is no business of mine or of Southwestern Seminary. But having so said, let it also be understood that we are Southwestern *Baptist* Theological Seminary, and we are not an institution belonging to the charismatic movement. Consequently, we have stated openly, and state it again, that we will not be the progenitor of charismatic doctrine – whether it is that which began in the troubled church at Corinth or continued in Montanism or what is known until our present day.
- “Well,” someone says, “You are not ecumenists. You will not build bridges, you will not cooperate.” Once again, that is a half truth. Ladies and gentlemen, it is absolutely true that we can and must cooperate with other people when it comes to matters of co-belligerency on moral issues. We at Southwestern Seminary do that. Furthermore, when it comes to the possibility of soul-winning and evangelism, we can show the “Jesus” film with anybody who believes that salvation is by grace through faith alone. However, ladies and gentlemen, when it comes to planting churches, we plant Baptist churches. They are the people who pay our bills and that is a separatist tradition.

Yes, I am a Separatist. That’s the way it began in England according to some – with Separatists. Then they became Baptist Separatists. If you want to go for the other view of Baptist origins, look to the Anabaptists in South Germany and Switzerland. While the Magisterial Reformers were honored because they said the right things, the Radical Reformers, the Anabaptists, said, “You say the right things: salvation by grace through faith alone; but why are you baptizing babies?” And these Anabaptists said, “We can’t do that. We can’t be in union with the State. We are Radical Reformers, we are Separatists.” Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary cooperates with anybody with whom we can, when we can, but in the final analysis, I assure you that we are Baptist Separatists.

[Questions and answers]

Wes Kinney, Trinity BC, Valiant, Okla.

“Dr. Patterson, you are as aware as anyone of rumors that can travel up and down this river that you have talked about. I wonder if you can tell me if it is true that women are being taught homemaking at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.”

PP: Thank you very much, Wes, for your question. I can tell you that beginning this next fall, we will have a Christian homemaking program at Southwestern Seminary. In Titus 2:5, the Bible says that we are to encourage the younger women to be—in the Holman Christian Standard translation of the Bible—“good homemakers.” We have had many of the wives of our future preachers to come to us and say, “We need to know in a day when homemaking is no longer honored whether or not it would be possible for us to have a

course of study that would lead to a degree in homemaking.” It is homemaking for the sake of the church and the ministry and homemaking for the sake of our society. Folks, if we do not do something to salvage the future of the home, both our denomination and our nation will be destroyed.

Joe Stewart, FBC Littlefield, graduate

“What are you doing to equip your faculty and students to carry out missions and evangelism throughout our world?”

PP: Thank you. Mr. President, that is a happy question to answer. We believe that first of all, every faculty member ought to go somewhere to a Third World mission field at least once every four years. A tremendous number of our faculty—as it is true in the other institutions also—go nearly every other year. In fact, our real problem is how to finance it all because everyone wants to go. For that I am very, very grateful. But it is positively amazing what a mission tour will do for the exegeting of a Hebrew verb. When there is a professor of Hebrew who has been over in the Mekong Delta or someplace else sharing Christ, not just teaching in somebody else’s seminary but sharing Christ down there on the river. When he comes back, even when he is conjugating a verb, it will have the fire of God in it. That is exactly what we want to accomplish. By the same token, we tell every student who comes that sometime in his sojourn here, “You will be expected to go to a Third World mission field.” My personal hope is that you will have to sleep in a hammock, fight off cobras and tarantulas, and eat rice three times a day. I want you to operate outside of your comfort zone and see the hand and the power of God. We believe that many people who don’t even have a commitment to worldwide missions will end up with that commitment.

Jack Maddox, FBC Dean, Texas

“The 21st century holds many challenges for the graduates of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Many of these challenges are new to us as Southern Baptists. Can you share with this convention what the seminary is doing to prepare our graduates for the unique challenges in the 21st century? And, what’s your opinion of what perhaps the greatest challenge may be?”

PP: My sweet brother, if I were to try to say what I think might be the most basic challenge we face today, it is the increased secularization of the entire world. I do not say that just as a Shibboleth, but I say it because our world increasingly wants to put God in a compartment and have Him safely there. To establish the gospel of Christ in men’s hearts is still the greatest single mountain we have to climb. We can only climb it in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are doing everything we can through missions and evangelism, but more than that, through the entire curriculum to point everybody to understand this world, meet it head-on with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in doing so let’s take as many as we can with us to heaven.

Sonny Hathaway, Northeast Houston BC, Humble, Texas

“As the head of our seminary there at Southwestern, are the trustees and employees of your entity allowed to sign the Baptist Faith and Message, our convention’s instrument of doctrinal accountability, with written or unwritten disagreements or exceptions?”

PP: To the very best of our ability, we cover everything with a prospective faculty member long before they get down to the point of signing. Then, when it comes time for their official introduction and election, in a chapel service we bring out the desk of B.H. Carroll and put it there on the platform. We bring out the chair of B.H. Carroll and we put it there on the platform. Dr. Blaising, our provost stands on one side; and I stand on the other side. There is before them a copy of the Baptist Faith and Message. We watch as they put just their signature, and only their signature, on it. There are no annotations.