

The *SBJT* Forum

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. Daniel L. Akin, David S. Dockery, Mark Dever, Thom S. Rainer, Hershael York, Timothy George, and David Miller have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

***SBJT:* GIVEN YOUR CLOSE relationship to Southern, what are some of your hopes and dreams for the seminary?**

Daniel L. Akin: I had the honor and joy of serving at Southern Seminary for almost eight years. Those were wonderful days in every way,

DANIEL L. AKIN is the President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Prior to this, he served as Senior Vice President for Academic Administration and Dean of the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Akin is a popular preacher and teacher and has authored numerous articles and books, including *1, 2, and 3 John* in the *New American Commentary* (B&H, 2001).

and Charlotte and I look back on that time with fondest memories. We built a deep and lasting friendship with Albert and Mary Mohler. I believe history will show that of all the great men who have led Southern Seminary, none will surpass the administration of Dr. Mohler in terms of vision, quality of faculty, and impact. I am well aware that some will challenge my words, but I am happy to let history make the call

on the accuracy of my prediction. In addition we came to know and love some of the most gifted and remarkable men and women anywhere in the world. I had the privilege of helping Dr. Mohler

build a world class faculty, and since my departure in 2004, and under the capable leadership of Dr. Russell Moore, it has only gotten better.

As I reflect upon Southern Seminary's past, present, and future, let me share several things for which I am thankful. Then I will note my hopes for its future.

First, I am eternally grateful for the recovery of confessional identity and integrity that now marks the seminary. Southern takes with great seriousness its affirmation of the Abstract of Principles and the *Baptist Faith and Message*. What is believed and taught is not an open or debated question. Southern Baptists can be very confident that what the seminary proudly confesses it faithfully teaches.

Second, I am thankful for the impact Southern's faculty is making in the classroom and in its writing. From the undergraduate program of Boyce College to the Ph.D. level, I have observed the excellence of a faculty that refuses to honor God with anything less than its best. This is not theoretical for me. My son Jonathan began as

a student at Boyce, made his way through the M.Div., and is now moving toward completion of his Ph.D. As a father vitally interested in a son he deeply loves, I have been pleased with what Jonathan has received in terms of instruction as well as mentoring by a faculty that loves students and takes a personal interest in them.

Third, I am appreciative of the rigorous biblical and theological education that finds its outlet in an expository model of preaching. Our churches are filled with biblically illiterate people. I fear many are filled with those who are unregenerate. Those who come through Norton Hall have impressed upon them the truths that the gospel must be central, theology really matters, and biblical exposition is essential to the health and vitality of our churches.

Fourth, I rejoice in the fact that Southern believes with Abraham Kuyper that God stamps all of creation with the word “mine!” Therefore, all that this world entails should—it must—be redeemed for the glory of God and the good of man. This pursuit will only reach its goal when Jesus returns to this earth to consummate His kingdom, but that truth will not hinder our efforts to move things in that direction until that glorious consummation takes place.

What are my hopes for the mother seminary of Southern Baptists with an eye toward the future? First and foremost, I want it to be a Great Commission seminary in confession, action, and reputation. I want the heartbeat of this wonderful institution to be the heartbeat of Jesus when he delivered his parting words at the end of Matthew’s gospel (28:18-20). Collin Hansen called Southern Seminary “ground zero” for Reformed theology. While I have a great appreciation for the “Reformed Tradition,” that is not what I want as the moniker attached to this seminary. Because it is Southern’s natural impulse to excel in biblical and theological studies, the passion for a Great Commission culture will always need to be intentional and intense. Because of its reputation, fair or unfair, as a hot bed for Calvinism, Southern Seminary will need to go the extra mile in confes-

sion and action to make clear what is of utmost importance in its mission. I want it to be nothing less and nothing other than the Great Commission. I want a Southern Seminary that draws from the tradition of Carey, Fuller, Rice, Judson, and Spurgeon. Administration, and especially the faculty (all of them!), need to be regularly on the mission field engaging the lostness of the world. It will give them a deeper theological and spiritual perspective. It will make them better teachers.

Second, I pray for a faculty and student body that loves God with their heart as well as with their mind. What I hope for here is “spiritual balance” that is wary of the danger exposed in 1 Cor 8:1. God is never honored by ignorance. He is not honored by a cold, hard heart either. Most seminaries need to heed this warning.

Third, I pray for a faculty and student body that joyfully embraces their calling to be personal evangelists for Jesus. Anyone called to leadership in Christ’s church is called to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). How we do it may take different routes, but that we do it is not an option.

Finally, I pray that Southern Seminary, and for that matter every seminary, will turn out students who love the church. Dr. Mohler and I talked about this on many occasions when I was at Southern. We noticed that many students were passionate for Christ and His Word, but that they were jaded and even jaundiced when it came to our Lord’s church. Now, I will be the first to admit I have seen and been a part of some very weak, sick, and dysfunctional churches. Nevertheless, I do not love Christ as I ought if I do not love His church as I should. To say it another way, I cannot love the bridegroom and trash His bride. He doesn’t like it when we do, and we better be careful. No, His bride sometimes is not very pretty, but he loves her, he died for her, and he is cleaning her up. I believe he wants us to join him in the process.

I congratulate The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary on its 150th anniversary. It has honored God and blessed the church for much of its

history. It has had a good past. My prayer is that the future will be even better.

SBJT: Can you give us a brief survey of the history of the study of the New Testament at Southern Seminary?

David S. Dockery: When one thinks of theological

DAVID S. DOCKERY is the President of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee.

Prior to this, he served as Vice President for Academic Administration, Dean of the School of Theology, and Professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Dockery is the author or editor of over twenty books, including *Interpreting the New Testament* (B&H, 2001), *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education* (rev. ed.; B&H, 2008), and *Southern Baptist Consensus and Renewal: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Proposal* (B&H, 2008).

education at Southern Seminary, observers are often drawn to the marvelous innovations through the years. Southern has been at the forefront of theological education in the study of the English Bible, the development of Ph.D. programs, the study of world religions, as well as psychology of religion, religious education, church music, and missions and church growth. Yet there has been a constant focus for 150 years on the study of the New Testament with particular emphasis on the study of the Greek language. John A. Broadus and A. T. Robertson set the trajectory during the

first half of this 150 year period, and their stamp remains even today. In this brief overview we will first look at the Broadus-Robertson period (1859-1934). We will divide the second half into a period of about fifty years (1930s-1980s), which will be followed by a look at the current period since the 1980s. A personal postscript will conclude the survey of the work of the New Testament department and its central role in the life and work of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

1859 – 1934

New Testament Study at Southern Seminary finds its beginnings with John A. Broadus (1827-95). In 1856 Broadus was appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention to serve on a feasibility study committee to prepare a plan for the seminary. This work was the introduction for Broadus of what was to be his life's work. Broadus

taught from 1859-1895, also serving as the Seminary's second president during his final years. As a member of the founding faculty, Broadus taught preaching and New Testament. Nearly thirty years after the founding of the seminary, Broadus published his magisterial commentary on *The Gospel of Matthew* (1886) in the American Commentary, a volume on which Broadus labored for over twenty years. This famous volume and his fine work on *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1893) have stood the test of time and provided the trajectory for future generations.

While John Sampey (1863-1946) and W. O. Carver (1868-1954) also briefly taught Greek and New Testament, it was the son-in-law of John Broadus, A. T. Robertson (1863-1934), who raised the bar to a new level. For forty-six years, from 1888-1934, "Dr. Bob," as he was affectionately known, penned forty-five books and numerous articles, including his magnificent *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (1914). While the "Big Grammar" sealed Robertson's legacy as the premier Baptist New Testament scholar of all time, it was the six-volume *Word Pictures of the New Testament* (1934) and the revision of Broadus's *Harmony of the Gospels* (1922) that help us to see Robertson's deep commitment to the church, particularly his love for pastors, as well as his faithfulness to the Broadus legacy.

Robertson was honored to carry forth the Broadus tradition. Broadus and Robertson faithfully taught the Bible in the spirit and conviction of the Baptist heritage, while advancing Baptist scholarship into the twentieth century, and placing it on solid footing. The legacy of their work is found not only in their writings, but in the lives of those whom they taught, best exemplified in pulpit giants like H. H. Hobbs and W. A. Criswell, and echoing throughout Southern Baptist life. We recognize in the writings of Broadus and Robertson the pervasive tone of solemn reverence for Scripture and an abiding and deep spirituality.

1930s – 1980s

W. Hersey Davis (1887-1950) became the leader of the New Testament department following the death of Robertson in 1934. Davis, who joined the faculty in 1920, was known as a model classroom teacher. While not as prolific as Robertson, Davis's *Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (1923) became a standard introductory textbook. Primarily known for his work as a grammarian and lexicographer, Davis's legacy was carried forth through his students who admired his gifted classroom teaching. The legacy of Broadus, Robertson, and Davis remains for all to see to this day on the Southern Seminary campus. The two faculty office wings in Norton Hall bear the names of Robertson and Davis, and the beautiful Broadus Chapel holds a special place for visitors and students alike.

Edward A. McDowell (1898-1975) joined the New Testament faculty in 1935. McDowell brought a theological emphasis to the department, which was best seen in his *Son of Man and Suffering Servant* (1944). He also penned an important volume on Revelation (1951). Though an awareness of the issues regarding historical criticism was evident with Broadus, Robertson, and Davis, it was McDowell, following his post-World War II sabbatical at Union Theological Seminary (NY), who opened the door to historical-critical studies at Southern. After McDowell left Southern to help launch Southeastern Seminary in North Carolina, the work of the New Testament department was carried forward by Henry Turlington, (1918-2000), W. W. Adams, (1892-1978), William E. Hull, (1930-), and Frank Stagg (1911-2001), among others. Turlington, Hull, Stagg, and McDowell all made important contributions to the Broadman Bible Commentary, for which Stagg served as the New Testament editor. Turlington wrote the commentary on Mark, Hull wrote the commentary on John, Stagg penned the works on Matthew and Philippians, and McDowell interpreted 1, 2, 3 John. All evidenced an openness to or embrace of

historical-critical methodologies. Other Southern faculty also contributed to the series: T. C. Smith (Acts), Dale Moody (Romans), Raymond Brown (1 Corinthians), George R. Beasley-Murray (2 Corinthians), E. Glen Hinson (1, 2 Timothy and Titus), and Harold Songer (James). The brilliant influence of Hull and Stagg continued well into the 1980s. Hull's influence extended far beyond the department with his significant administrative roles. Stagg's *New Testament Theology* (1962) and his commentary on Acts (1955) shaped the way many Southern Baptists read the New Testament in the second half of the twentieth century. Stagg's interpretations, however, of key New Testament themes, especially his treatment of the atonement, have been severely criticized by many as demonstrated in an interpretative article on the life and influence of Stagg by Robert Sloan ("Frank Stagg," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* [ed. T. George and D. Dockery; B&H, 2001], 257-78).

Ray Summers (1910-1992), who also wrote an introductory Greek textbook (1950) and contributed the work on the Petrine Epistles in the Broadman Commentary, brought a perspective to the department during his brief time at the seminary that was more representative of the Robertson tradition. Peter Rhea Jones (1937-) contributed creative works on the parables.

George Beasley-Murray (1916-2000), who taught at the seminary from 1973-80, brought a rich theological approach to the study of the New Testament reflecting the influence of British evangelicalism. His work was marked by evangelical conviction as well as an openness to conversation with broader ecumenical emphases. His works on *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962), *The Book of Revelation* (1974), and *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (1986) continue to influence both scholars and pastors. Though technically considered professors in the department of theology, the impact Dale Moody (1915-1992) and Wayne Ward (1921-) had on New Testament studies at Southern cannot be overlooked.

1980s – THE PRESENT

The New Testament department during the final decades of the twentieth century was stellar in its scholarship. R. Alan Culpepper (1945-) broke new ground with his creative literary studies. His *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (1983) received wide-ranging attention from the scholarly community. The work of James Blevins (1936-2004) on the Book of Revelation (*Revelation as Drama*, 1984) reflected the same kind of creativity as Culpepper's. Extensive work on the background of the New Testament was provided by Harold S. Songer (1928-2005) and David E. Garland. Garland, a marvelous classroom teacher and the current interim president at Baylor University, has written important commentaries on the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul, including a brilliant exposition of 2 Corinthians in the New American Commentary (1999). New Testament studies at Southern Seminary took a significant turn toward a more historical orthodox direction in the department colloquium in the spring of 1989. With a focus on 2 Corinthians for the semester, Garland, commenting on 2 Cor 5:21, publicly countered the teaching of his doctoral mentor Frank Stagg on the atonement by affirming the Pauline emphasis on substitutionary atonement, comments which were well received and endorsed by the majority of both faculty and students in attendance.

Gerald Borchert and John Polhill provided additional evangelical voices to the department. Borchert contributed two volumes on John (1996, 2002) in the New American Commentary and Polhill wrote the widely-praised commentary on Acts (1992) in that series. A gifted writer and wonderful classroom teacher, Polhill also contributed a major work on *Paul and His Letters* (1999). Carey Newman brought his rhetorical emphases to the interpretation of Paul during the 1990s.

More recent and current members of the department have also made their mark. Robert H. Stein is an extremely capable Gospels scholar and author of the volume on Luke (1993) in the

New American Commentary. Thomas Schreiner is a prolific scholar with major commentaries on Romans (1998), the Petrine Epistles (2003), and an impressive work on *New Testament Theology* (2008). Mark Seifrid is recognized for his exegetical and theological insights into the writings of the Apostle Paul. William Cook brings pastoral insight to the teaching of the New Testament, while Daniel Hatfield and Robert Plummer add a vibrant missionary perspective. Brian Vickers, Jonathan Pennington, and James Hamilton are fine New Testament scholars who reflect the theological emphases of Schreiner and Seifrid. Daniel Akin, who now serves as President of Southeastern Seminary, contributed the warm exposition of the Johannine Epistles (2001) in the New American Commentary when he served as Dean and Vice President at Southern.

PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT

I was invited to serve as a visiting professor in the New Testament department in 1987 and was elected to a full time faculty position in 1988 where I taught in both the New Testament and Theology departments from 1988-1996. It has been my privilege to author interpretive works on both Broadus and Robertson. My first faculty office was housed in the Robertson wing of Norton Hall, which was most meaningful for me as I am sure it has been for dozens of others. I have personally listened to H. H. Hobbs and W. A. Criswell tell stories about their classes with Robertson and Davis.

I have been honored to know Drs. Hull, Stagg, Beasley-Murray, Moody, Ward, Culpepper, Blevins, Songer, Garland, Borchert, Polhill, Newman, Stein, and the current faculty. I have been blessed to serve as the New Testament editor for the New American Commentary series, which has included significant volumes by Stein, Borchert, Polhill, Garland, Schreiner, and Akin. I was present in that New Testament colloquium in 1989 when David Garland's public comments on 2 Corinthians 5 turned the tide of New Testa-

ment studies at Southern in a more explicit evangelical direction, thus reversing the trends that had developed since the days of E. A. McDowell.

Indeed, the best of the Broadus-Robertson tradition has now been recovered. The thoroughgoing scholarship, serious exposition, careful exegesis, and devotional spirit that characterized the best of both Broadus and Robertson remains a worthy model to be imitated and carried forward in the twenty-first century. We give thanks to God for the far-reaching kingdom impact of Southern Seminary's New Testament department over the past 150 years.

SBJT: In what areas should we be thankful for God's kindness towards Southern over these last 150 years?

Mark Dever: Some years ago, I happened to be staying in the old guesthouse of the seminary during the same time the late D. James Kennedy was there. He remarked to me how lovely the grounds were, and how storied the history of the place. And he said, "This is your Princeton. We [Presbyterians] lost ours; but you were able to retake yours!"

I can only imagine the pleasure that James Petigru Boyce, the Seminary's founder—and an alumnus of the old Princeton—would take at that observation. Both the comparison itself, and then the reflection on God's good providence through this institution, would have pleased him.

It was my privilege to grow up in what some have called a typical Southern Baptist, county seat, tall steeple First Baptist Church, and to do so back when Southern Baptist church practices were fairly uniform. The "culture," as we grandly say, was intact. Our pastor was a graduate of Southern in the 1930s and held his association with the school close to his heart. The faculty of the seminary in the 1960s and 1970s were regularly preaching in our church (though it has to be said that our pastor's preaching was more expositional and more orthodox than theirs). My own family has been associated with the seminary at various

points of its history. I currently have the privilege of serving as the chairman of the Board of Trustees. I've been a trustee for about ten years. I was a student at Southern in the mid-1980s. My uncle was a student 1972-1975. And my great-grandfather was a student at SBTS for three classes in 1911.

The school has grown from its initial twenty-six students in 1859 to now over 4,000. Its character was and is again Baptist, evangelical, Reformed, and Protestant. It was always a counter-point to the populist Landmarkist movement, particularly popular among Baptists in Kentucky and surrounding areas. President Whitsitt was removed from office because of controversy with Landmarkists. And President Sampey always made a particular point of stressing the doctrine of "the universal spiritual church" (the doctrine the Landmarkists denied). Sampey stressed the fact that the universal church was "that Church which Christ established on the rock (Matt 16:18); the only church that has received and enjoyed the promise of unbroken succession; the only church that is identical with the kingdom of God, and outside of which salvation is impossible" (John R. Sampey, *Memoirs* [Broadman, 1947], 100).

Early in the seminary's life, it was faced with a choice of the priority of personal relationships or orthodoxy, and, with tears, Boyce and Broadus fired the erring Crawford Toy and, so, chose to prioritize orthodoxy. Again, a century after Boyce's death, this priority was clearly recovered and is again operating consistently with the founders' wishes and intentions.

Many who have gone into making this school what it has become under God go unnoticed by historians. So, for example, consider founding faculty member John Broadus's reflections on what his wife had borne in order to allow Broadus

MARK DEVER serves as Senior Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC.

He is the President of 9Marks Ministries and has taught at a number of seminaries, including Beeson Divinity School, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Dever is the author of several books, including *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Crossway, 2004), *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Crossway, 2005), and *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Crossway, 2007).

to serve the seminary as he did. Broadus wrote,

I feel proud of having such a wife, who has not only mind and knowledge and character, such as I am sure will make her in the end a successful teacher, but who will urge her husband to cling to the ministry, though it must keep her in poverty, and even sometimes require, as now, that she should toil beyond her strength to eke out the inadequate support. Precious wife, my heart bleeds when I think of her fatigues and distress, of all her sacrifice and self-denial, met without any affectation of heroism, met with all the shrinking of a sensitive and delicate woman, not made to stand alone in the world, and yet with all the firmness and fortitude of a noble heart. People sometimes speak of my making sacrifices in order to preach, but I am apt to think in my heart, it is not I, it is my wife that bears the cross (John A. Broadus in a letter to his wife, printed in A. T. Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* [American Baptist Publication Society, 1901], 136).

Through the unlikely path of liberalism, orthodoxy was attacked as “creedalism” in the second half of the twentieth century, even in the chapel sermons by the seminary’s own faculty. But Basil Manly Jr.’s Abstract of Principles (which he himself referred to as a “creed”) has outlasted not only its critics, but also those who would affirm it for employment’s sake, though they themselves had numerous mental reservations.

God has continued to honor the tenacity of the school’s founders. The famous story is told of the first meeting of the seminary after the Civil War. A. T. Robertson recounted it of his father-in-law Broadus, meeting with Boyce, Manly, and Williams.

The end of the Seminary seemed at hand. When they all came together, Broadus said, “Suppose we quietly agree that the Seminary may die, but we’ll die first.” So the four professors held

together. . . . When the Seminary did reopen on Nov. 1st, it was with only seven students. In homiletics Doctor Broadus had only one student, and he was blind. But it was like Doctor Broadus to give this one blind student the best he had. The careful preparation of full lectures for the blind brother led to the writing of “Preparation and Delivery of Sermons” (Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus*, 214).

Commitment. Diligence. Faithfulness. And a willingness to start something new for the benefit of the churches. These marked the seminary from its founding. Even as Boyce raised the finances for the institution, Broadus gave himself to raising its profile. He was one of the most popular preachers in the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. The seminary faculty was engaged in evangelical life beyond the Southern Baptist Convention. So Broadus preached in “churches of all evangelical denominations” (Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus*, 316). In 1884, in celebration of the birthday of London’s C. H. Spurgeon, the seminary faculty sent him a letter in which they said “Especially we delight to think how nobly you have defended and diffused the doctrines of grace” (Basil Manly Jr. actually died eight years later on the same day as Spurgeon).

There was an evident catholicity in the Christianity of the seminary during its first generation. But there was also evident thankfulness for the particular blessings of our own denomination. So Dr. Broadus reported that “it was sometimes said by other denominations that Baptists had among them a great mass of ignorant people. This was true. And he felt like replying to those who made the statement, ‘Why haven’t you a similar mass?’” (Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus*, 379).

Controversy has repeatedly engulfed the school. I appreciate the struggles earlier Board chairmen have had to weather. So W. E. Hatcher of Virginia chaired the Board through the Landmarkist controversies surrounding the presidency

of William Whitsitt. Our current President is not the first to know controversy (though he may have been the first to have survived it so well!).

Southern Seminary stands today squarely on the truth of the gospel, of the Scriptures, as summarized in its original Abstract of Principles. The quality of education as represented in the faculty, the curriculum, and the library facilities is good. The fellowship among the students is warm. Networks of friendship and cooperation in ministry are being fashioned which will see this generation through as earlier connections did earlier generations. The churches of Louisville are undergoing a regeneration themselves which reflects the spiritual regeneration of the seminary. And the continuing trust and generosity of Southern Baptist churches makes this education affordable.

Looking back over the 150 years of God's kindnesses to this institution gives us reasons for great thanksgiving, and for even greater hope as we look forward.

SBJT: As a student at Southern Seminary during the conservative resurgence, what are some of your remembrances of this significant time in Southern's history?

Thom S. Rainer: I began my journey to Southern Seminary with a great deal of zeal and probably even more naiveté. My pastor was an alumnus of Southern. His recommendation carried so much weight that I chose Southern without visiting Louisville; and I never considered another seminary. My background was banking, and I had been a Southern Baptist for only three years when I was called to ministry.

In November 1982, my wife and our two young sons (we would add a third child three years later) rented a U-Haul and moved our remaining possessions to Seminary Village. Though the conservative resurgence was in its third year, I had little awareness of the battle, and I certainly did not know that The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was ground zero in the battle.

I began classes in January 1983. And I would

remain at Southern through June 1988. In that time I earned both the Master of Divinity and the Doctor of Philosophy. In addition, I learned much about the conservative resurgence in those few years.

Because of my ignorance about the political maelstrom in the Southern Baptist Convention, I entered Southern with absolutely no political agenda. Indeed, because of the influence of some students and professors, I was more sympathetic to those in the moderate camp in my early days at Southern.

My move to become a proponent of the conservative resurgence was really the result of two major factors: attending classes at Southern and the influence of conservative students. I have no need to name professors or rehash specifics that are over three decades old. Simply stated, I was stunned by what was being taught in some of the classes. Countless times I heard doubts expressed by professors regarding the accuracy and truthfulness of Scripture. And on some occasions, I heard moral positions advocated that would have shocked most Baptist laity.

I thus became convinced and convicted that a conservative resurgence was necessary. I was troubled by what I was hearing in many of my classes; and I was troubled that many of the SBC churches were unaware of these issues. I began to read voraciously about the paths of mainline denominations; and I was convinced that our denomination was already headed down that path. The trend had to be reversed. The plan of the conservative leaders was simple: elect a conservative president who would ultimately influence through his appointments the trustees who would serve in the various SBC entities, particularly the seminaries.

THOM S. RAINER is President of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Before coming to LifeWay, Rainer served as the inaugural Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism, and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, and Indiana. Dr. Rainer is the author of many books, including *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched* (Zondervan, 2001), *The Unchurched Next Door* (Zondervan, 2003), *Breakout Churches* (Zondervan, 2005), and (with Sam S. Rainer) *Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (B&H, 2008).

Those trustees in turn would ultimately name conservative presidents to the entities, and then these men would change the course of the institutions.

One of the great benefits of my years at Southern was developing friendships with fellow conservative students. Many of them became life-long friends. We eventually organized our own student group, the Student Evangelical Forum (SEF). The administration of Southern was not supportive of our new group, but they eventually granted us recognition as an official student group of the seminary. We were a small number of students relative to the overall student population, but we were a close-knit group. Because we often sat at a large round table in the student lounge, we soon accepted the unofficial moniker as “the round table.”

Historical records of the conservative influence at Southern Seminary would be incomplete without an account of the key role of Dr. Lewis Drummond. Dr. Drummond was the Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism. He also served as the faculty sponsor of the SEF. He was our mentor, our counselor, and our encourager. From Lewis Drummond we learned that conservative theology was not mutually exclusive with academic excellence. We also learned that one could be strong in his theological convictions and still maintain an irenic spirit.

It is that issue where I have the greatest regret. I was willing to speak the truth, but more times that I am comfortable admitting, I often did not speak the truth in love. Those years at Southern

Seminary were contentious times. Emotions were high. Theological debates sometimes degenerated into personal vendettas. Words were exchanged that did not demonstrate the love of Christ. Guilty parties were on both sides of the debate. But my concern is not so much with what others said and did; I must take responsibility for my own actions and words. Sadly,

I must confess that I did not bring honor to God in much of what I said in the years I was a student at Southern.

Do I believe the conservative resurgence was needed? Unequivocally and without hesitation, my answer is “yes.” At least as evidenced by many of my classroom experiences at Southern Seminary, the path on which we were headed theologically was a path away from the complete veracity of Scripture. I honestly do not know what alternative we had other than the conservative resurgence.

I am a Southern Baptist by conviction. I was raised in a liberal, mainline church. My journey to become a Southern Baptist began when I first married. My wife and I were looking for a new church home. It was in a Southern Baptist church that I saw the vital need to be in a Bible-believing, mission-minded, evangelistic church. I thus became a Southern Baptist by doctrinal, missional, and evangelistic conviction.

I am also a proponent of the conservative resurgence by conviction. It was at Southern Seminary where I discovered that many sectors of our denomination were moving away from doctrinal fidelity and evangelistic passion. Change was desperately needed, and the conservative resurgence provided the vehicle for that change.

Indeed, I serve as the President of LifeWay Christian Resources because I have been able to stand on the shoulders of the giants who paid the price for the change. It is my prayer that I will be a faithful steward of the responsibility given to me, that I will continue to stand for truth, and that I will live that truth in all that I say and do for the glory of God.

SBJT: Over twenty years ago you chose not to attend Southern Seminary as a student due to personal conviction, but now you are a member of the faculty. Reflect on what brought about this change in your thinking.

Hershael York: As an aspiring seminarian in 1987, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary never even made my list for serious consideration.

HERSHAEL YORK is Associate Dean of Ministry and Proclamation, and Victor and Louise Lester Professor of Christian Preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dr. York has authored two books on speaking and preaching, has served as the President of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and is currently the Pastor of the Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort, Kentucky.

After completing a Master of Arts in Classical Greek at the University of Kentucky and serving seven years as an associate pastor in Lexington, I felt led to earn a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Philosophy degree at a seminary. Though my young family and I were comfortable, living in church housing, enjoying a steady income, and surrounded by family and friends, I never thought about matriculating at Southern—even though it was within driving distance.

I distinctly remember the conversation in which my pastor suggested I attend Southern. He offered me the same salary, housing, and whatever time I needed during the week to attend classes. Though I was grateful for his generosity, my answer was short and to the point. I refused because I wanted to go to a seminary where all the professors believed the Bible, including the miracles.

Imagine the shock to my system when, a mere ten years later, I joined the faculty in the school I had so quickly dismissed. The events of the intervening years had so radically altered the course of the seminary that I was happy to teach at a school that only a decade earlier I considered completely inconsistent with my own convictions.

The heroic decision of the trustees to elect the thirty-three-year-old R. Albert Mohler Jr. as the ninth president of Southern Seminary forever altered the course of the school, the Southern Baptist Convention, and my life. By the time he was elected president I had finished my seminary work at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee, and was back in Kentucky, serving as pastor of the same church I had previously served before I left to attend seminary. I watched Dr. Mohler's early years with more than passing interest. I heard the stories of students who stood in chapel and turned their backs to him when he preached. Some trustees shared with me how the faculty opposed him and repeatedly expressed their disdain. The *Western Recorder*, the Kentucky Baptist newspaper, gleefully and relentlessly reported the turmoil that pervaded the campus. I could not help but wonder if he would

survive the wounds of radical change.

But radical change was precisely what the seminary needed, and one need not take the word of conservatives for that. In 1997 Susan M. Shaw and Tisa Lewis, both Ph.D. graduates of Southern, conducted a survey of twenty-six out of thirty-four women who had graduated from Southern with a Ph.D. or Ed.D. in the ten years prior to Mohler's election [Susan M. Shaw and Tisa Lewis, "'Once There Was a Camelot': Women Doctoral Graduates of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982-1992, Talk about the Seminary, the Southern Baptist Convention, and Their Lives since SBTS," *Review and Expositor* 95, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 397-423]. According to the interviews the authors conducted, they found that of the twenty-six SBTS graduates they interviewed

thirteen are involved in higher education. Four work in the local church, five participate in other forms of religious work, and four are no longer in ministry. All of the women in the study are white. Four identify as lesbian. Thirteen are married. Eleven are ordained. Eighteen also received a masters degree from Southern Seminary. Twenty-one of the 26 were Southern Baptist when they began doctoral work. Of those 21, only three are still Southern Baptist. Six are members of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship churches, 10 have joined churches in other denominations (Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, American Baptist, Episcopalian, United Methodist, Metropolitan Community Church), and two no longer participate in religious communities.

One cannot help but be saddened to think that Southern Baptists were supporting a seminary that was graduating female Ph.D. students with the surreptitious message that being a lesbian would not impede service in a Southern Baptist context. Some of Shaw and Lewis's interviewees also accused the faculty in those years of sexual harassment:

Four women reported having been physically sexually harassed or assaulted by male professors or male graduate students (grabbed or kissed). Several others reported having been asked out on a date by married graduate students. Judy suggested that a “bar culture” existed among male doctoral students in the graduate lounge in the seminary’s library.

Strangely enough, the article laments the passing of the old Southern Seminary and expresses anger at Mohler for leading the seminary back to its “fundamentalist” moorings. One wonders how avowed feminist theologians would ever look wistfully at a past that included alleged blatant sexual harassment.

By 1997, Dr. Mohler’s realignment of the seminary was well on its way. Student enrollment reached its nadir, the lowest in many years due to the closing of the Carver School and other factors. Moderate to liberal students quit coming, and conservative students were still mindful of the

school’s recent past. I joined the faculty by presidential appointment because, as I was candidly informed, the faculty would not have elected me. My appointment to the faculty, however, was not without controversy. The *Western Recorder* penned an article that was clearly critical of the choice, linking me with the Whitsitt Controversy of 1896 in the process. One Baptist association in Ohio passed a resolution against my hiring and protested to Dr. Mohler. I received one call from a liberal

Baptist pastor in my city who felt obligated to share his opinion that Southern had really “gone off the deep end” by hiring me, while another conservative called to beg me not to treat liberal students as badly as he had been treated by moderate professors while enrolled at Southern.

Now, more than a decade later, the impact that

Southern Seminary has had on Southern Baptist life is incalculable. Perhaps most noticeably, the Kentucky Baptist Convention has changed as a result. Hundreds of young Southern Seminary graduates now fill the pulpits of Kentucky Baptist churches, confidently preaching from a Bible they believe is not only inerrant, but sufficient. Two other adjunct faculty members and I have served as president in the last four years. Next year KBC messengers will hear the convention sermon from Dr. R. Albert Mohler, another milestone in KBC-SBTS relations.

Dr. Mohler’s leadership and the biblical fidelity of the faculty has changed much about Southern Seminary since 1993. It now ranks as the largest seminary. More importantly, when my own son was weighing his options for seminary, he wanted to enroll in a conservative school that would best prepare him for a life of ministry and service to the church. Perhaps the most telling change in Southern Seminary is that he was as resolute in his desire to attend Southern as I was in my decision to go elsewhere.

SBJT: How did you come to teach at Southern Seminary and what are your impressions of the decade you spent on the faculty there?

Timothy George: I was a member of Southern’s faculty from 1978 to 1988, a period of transition in the life of the seminary and a formative time in my own work as a scholar and teacher. When I came to Southern in the late seventies, I was one of the few faculty members who had done no study at any Baptist institution. In the conservative Baptist circles in which I had grown up around Chattanooga, Southern was regarded as far too “liberal.” The pastors I knew and trusted recommended New Orleans Seminary and Southwestern Seminary as more biblical and evangelistic schools. However, *mirabile dictu*, I was led to Harvard Divinity School where I had the privilege of working with the great church historian, George Huntston Williams.

Williams had lectured at Southern and once

TIMOTHY GEORGE is the founding Dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and a Senior Editor of Christianity Today.

He is a highly sought-after preacher and conference speaker and has served as pastor for churches in Tennessee, Alabama, and Massachusetts. A prolific author, Dr. George regularly contributes to scholarly journals and has written more than 20 books, including *Theology of the Reformers* (B&H, 1999) and *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?* (Zondervan, 2002).

compared it to the great monastic community at Cluny with thousands of students busily engaged in study, worship, and church work. I found Southern a bustling community if not quite monastic. Duke McCall was the president when I joined the faculty and Roy Honeycutt was the dean. My friend Bill Leonard was already a member of the faculty and encouraged me to join him there.

When I came to Southern, I was a member of both the church history and theology departments. Historical theology had not been pursued in a serious way since the departure of James Leo Garrett some years before. The effort to revive this discipline led to some tension, and one colleague suggested that I stick to the Reformation (in a narrow sense) and leave the history of doctrine alone. With one or two exceptions, though, I was well received by other members of the faculty and developed deep friendships that persist to this day.

During my faculty interview I wanted to lay all of my cards on the table, so to speak, and confessed that I was an inerrantist, a Calvinist, and a premillennialist. This brought some amusement to the group, and one person remarked that Southern had hired no one with those views for at least 100 years! Later, there was more of a stir when I suggested that the seminary would do well to reconsider its “evangelical and Reformed roots.” The leading anti-Calvinist on the faculty in those days was Dale Moody with whom I always had a cordial relationship, and with whom I often agreed on many other points of biblical interpretation. On one occasion, Moody invited me to debate him on Calvinism in his theology class. It was a memorable event, as I presented him with a bouquet of tulips and he gave me the holy kiss!

I was honored when I was asked to present in 1988 the annual Founder’s Day address. I chose to speak on James P. Boyce, a collection of whose sermons I edited. Cave Hill Cemetery became a special place for meditation and prayer, and I often gave lectures to my students around the graves of Boyce, Broadus, Robertson, Mullins, and other leaders of the seminary who lie buried there.

I found that students knew little, if anything, about those pioneers of the past, and I wanted to encourage a program of *réssourcement*—not a return to “the good old days” but an appropriation of the warranted wisdom and spiritual insight they can offer to the church today.

It was at Southern that I learned to teach and learned to love teaching. I recall walking down a hallway in Norton one day headed to my church history class and thinking to myself, “Wow, this is a wonderful calling—and such fun!” To this day, I can think of nothing in ministry more exhilarating, apart from preaching the gospel, than helping to prepare God-called men and women for the service of the church of Jesus Christ. I have always believed that teaching should be no less confessional than preaching. A professor who doesn’t profess something is worse than useless. If we never get beyond “on the one hand this, and the other hand that” in our teaching, we should leave the lectern alone and just let the students use the web.

During my ten years at Southern, I was privileged to teach a cadre of superb students, highly motivated and eager to learn. Mark Dever, Mark DeVine, Al Mohler, Thom Rainer, Bruce Beck, Tim McCoy, Elizabeth Newman, Barry Harvey, Paul House, and Brent Walker are among the students I taught. I rejoice in all that God continues to do through their life and witness. I also tried to have an open-door policy to students, and I encouraged informal contacts outside of class. On one occasion, however, I remember thinking I was carrying this a bit far when one of my students followed me directly from a classroom into the faculty men’s room calling out, “Dr. George, Dr. George, I have a question.”

The specter of Landmarkism has shadowed the history of Southern Seminary for most of its 150 years leading to the resignation of one president (W. H. Whitsitt) and the attenuated ecclesiology of another (E. Y. Mullins). In some ways, the lure of an introverted Baptocentrism still haunts the SBC today. But my experience at Southern Semi-

nary taught me that one could be deeply committed to the Baptist heritage and also committed to Christian unity throughout the Body of Christ. At its best, Southern Seminary has a history of being both evangelical and ecumenical. This was the emphasis of George Beasley-Murray, Carl F. H. Henry, and James Earl Massey, three great teachers of the church who became my friends and mentors—all of whom I first met at Southern Seminary. May God continue to bless and use this great institution for the furtherance of his Kingdom, to the praise of his glory. As Basil Manly, Jr. wrote in the seminary hymn: “Morning and evening sow the seed, God’s grace the effort shall succeed.”

SBJT: You served on the Board of Trustees during a crucial time in Southern Seminary’s history. Reflect on your relationship to Southern and why you believe the Abstract of Principles is so important to the seminary’s future.

DAVID MILLER is President of Line upon Line Ministries and serves as a country preacher at-large.

He has also served as the Director of Missions for the Little Red River Baptist Association, Heber Springs, Arkansas, from 1969-1995, and on the Board of Trustees of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1988-1995.

David Miller: My first exposure to Southern Seminary was in 1981 when Professor Dale Moody spoke at the Arkansas State Evangelism Conference. I thought it strange when Dr. Moody said, “I believe in propitiation as long as you allow me to define the term. However, I do not believe the old notion that God was mad ‘til Jesus made

Him glad.” Shortly after this meeting, Dr. Moody came to my hometown of Heber Springs, Arkansas, to speak at the First Baptist Church. The pastor came to my office the next day disturbed that Dr. Moody preached that it is possible for a child of God to willfully turn away from Christ and lose his salvation. The pastor was uncomfortable challenging his “old professor” so he gave me a copy of Moody’s book *The Word of Truth* and asked me to read the chapter on “Salvation and Apostasy.”

Later, the Executive Board of the Little Red River Association wrote a letter to President Duke

McCall inquiring how the Seminary could retain Dr. Moody on the faculty when he was teaching inconsistent with and contrary to the Abstract of Principles. Dr. McCall wrote an innocuous letter suggesting that we must substantiate our charges with many infallible proofs. So, we documented the charges and referred him to Dr. Moody’s chapter on “Salvation and Apostasy”; however, Dr. McCall ignored us thereafter. When Dr. Honeycutt became President, we sent him and the Arkansas trustees, Wilson Deese and Emil Williams, copies of all previous correspondence; however, we received no response from any of them. I was deeply disappointed by their lack of action.

By God’s good providence, I was serving on the Executive Board of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Following the example of the owner of the vineyard in Matthew 21, I thought, perhaps, they will honor them! I presented Dr. Moody’s chapter on “Salvation and Apostasy” to the Executive Board along with copies of all previous correspondence. The Executive Board instructed the Executive Director to write to Dr. Honeycutt and Dr. Moody requesting a response to our concerns. We also informed them of our intentions to print their responses in the Arkansas Baptist News-Magazine. Dr. Honeycutt defended Dr. Moody’s right to teach at Southern Seminary in his response. In typical fashion, Dr. Moody retaliated by saying, “If you want Arkansas to know what I believe, then print my chapter on Salvation and Apostasy.” So we did just that!

Again, by providence, I was President of the Arkansas State Pastor’s Conference at that time. In an attempt to be fair to Dr. Moody, I invited him to speak at the Pastor’s Conference in order to defend his position on apostasy. I assured him that while I did not agree with his position, he would be treated with grace and respect as a Christian brother. With great enthusiasm, Dr. Moody told 1,100 Arkansas Baptists that it was possible for Christians willfully to turn away from Christ and lose their salvation. The next day, Arkansas Baptists voted with a 95 percent majority to call

for his resignation. The tragedy is that Dr. Moody was allowed to teach this theology of apostasy at Southern for forty years.

My second exposure to Southern Seminary was in 1987. My wife and I, along with many others, led a grass roots effort to pass the “Unborn Child Amendment” which prevents the use of state tax dollars to fund abortions. The pro-abortion crowd brought in Dr. Paul Simmons, ethics professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, to speak against the amendment. On state-wide television, Simmons said, “We don’t know when personhood begins. We are not aborting a person. We are aborting a glob of protoplasm.” I was stunned! My church was helping to pay his salary. How could this be?

In 1988, I was elected to the Trustee Board at Southern. I was an itinerant country preacher. I hadn’t graduated from college nor had I attended a seminary. There was no reason for me to be a trustee other than divine providence. At my orientation, I was asked to give a three-minute testimony. In my deliberations for the testimony, I remembered that opportunity neglected may never come my way again, or as with the Israelites, it might be forty years from now! So I began by saying, “I had a very lowly beginning in life. I was not only a *depraved fellow*, I was a *deformed fetus*. Consequently, I get nervous around Baptist ethics professors who are pro-choice on abortion. If you think I have an agenda as I come to serve on this Board, then I commend you for your discernment!”

At my first official meeting of the Trustee Board, we were asked to give tenure to a female faculty member. As I perused her vitae sheet, I noticed that she was an ordained deacon at a local Baptist church in Louisville. I inquired further and spoke against giving tenure to a woman deacon. I suggested this was an aberrant view among those Southern Baptists who view the deacon role as equivalent to pastor/elder. However, the vote to grant tenure was 58 to 1. I was not in the majority! I requested that the record show

that David Miller voted against it. How could I preach one thing back home and do the exact opposite at the Seminary?

It soon became obvious to me that if real change were to occur at Southern, not only would policy manuals have to be re-written, but an appeal to the Seminary’s charter and the enforcement of the Abstract of Principles would have to occur. We could not allow faculty and administrators to continue to interpret the Abstract differently from what the founding fathers intended. For example, we kept hearing professors tell us that the article on inspiration did not necessarily mean “plenary verbal inspiration.” Again, by providence, I acquired sixty-five copies of Basil Manly’s book on inspiration and sent a copy to every trustee. I suggested that primary sources were more reliable than secondary sources. Since Basil Manly wrote the Abstract, he was in a better position to explain what the Abstract meant than “academics” who, sadly, too often re-write history for their own agenda.

The Abstract also served us well when it was time to select a new president. We were compelled to find a man who embraced all twenty articles. The new president must understand and affirm the reformed theology that the Abstract confesses. For example, while the Abstract does not require one to believe in “limited atonement,” it does require one to believe in penal substitution, total depravity, unconditional election, and the preservation/perseverance of the saints.

Recently, some people have suggested that Southern Seminary abandon the Abstract of Principles and use only the *Baptist Faith and Message*. In my opinion, this is not a correct way to go. It would not only rob Southern Seminary of her rich heritage as the flagship Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention, but as history has shown, it has served Southern very well over the years.