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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 22, 1985

85-33

Attempt to Fire Prof
Fails At Southwestern

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Amid charges of political implications and allegations a "profane" man was being returned to the classroom, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees March 20 rejected a recommendation from the administration and their own academic affairs committee to fire a professor.

The vote by secret ballot was 19-12 to fire Farrar Patterson, associate professor of communication and preaching since 1969, but it fell two votes short of the two-thirds majority required by the seminary bylaws.

It was believed to be the first time a motion to fire a professor has been brought to the Southwestern trustees since the institution was founded in 1908, although President Russell H. Dilday Jr. said some have resigned before their cases could come to the board.

The Southern Baptist Convention political controversy was prominent in the debate on the recommendation to fire Patterson with several trustees charging Dilday's involvement in the controversy prompted the recommendation. Dilday, in turn, contended at least some of the 12 against the proposal were politically motivated. Farrar Patterson is not related to Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, who has been a leader of one faction in the SBC controversy.

The balloting followed several hours of hearings by the academic affairs committee, which voted 8-1 for Patterson's dismissal, and discussion by the full board on the recommendation that Patterson, who recently was suspended from his teaching duties, be dismissed.

Dilday and the academic affairs committee, chaired by Drew Gurnells, pastor of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., brought a six-point charge against Patterson, questioning:

- 1) Lifestyle and behavior, including profanity and vulgar language, including cursing the dean of theology, critical and negative confrontations;
- 2) Poor example of churchmanship, including no record of active churchmanship, and marginal stewardship;
- 3) Poor quality of work, including poor student evaluations and appraisals over the years and no "scholarly approach";
- 4) Insubordination, including interference in Dilday's accession to the presidency and interference in the hiring of others in the administration;
- 5) Intentional distortion of the truth, including reports of classes taken at North Texas State University in 1976; and a report given to an Arkansas pastor about the faculty meeting in November 1984 in which Dilday's right to speak out on the SBC controversy was affirmed by the faculty;
- 6) Lack of response to significant warnings and attempts to redeem. Dilday said he had attempted to discuss the charges with Patterson, who had refused.

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Dilday said he had attempted to discuss the charges with Patterson, who had refused and had told Dilday in a telephone conversation that the president was going "to di " if he pursued the matter. Patterson's wife, Edwina, spoke from the gallery that Dilday's statement was not true, that she had overheard the conversation.

Dilday explained salary increases had been denied to Patterson four times in the last few years because of what was considered an inadequate performance and that he twice had been given leaves without pay—once by former SWBTS President Robert E. Naylor—to get his affairs in order.

Dilday acknowledged the incident following the November faculty meeting in which Patterson gave what Dilday called an erroneous report of the meeting to W.O. Vaught, pastor emeritus of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, was the "culminating" incident.

Patterson, who did not attend the faculty meeting, reportedly called Vaught and reported the faculty was divided on support of the president's right to speak out. However the disagreement in the faculty actually was on how the action in support of the president was to be described, sources said.

Patterson's report to Vaught was reported to Dilday by a Florida pastor, Dilday said. Patterson was summoned to Dilday's office on Jan. 14. Dilday said he had requested the discussion be confidential, according to the faculty manual procedures, but said Patterson had reported it to others. Patterson subsequently was suspended from his teaching duties and the recommendation made for his dismissal.

Had it not been for the incident involving the report to Vaught, Dilday said the matter likely would not have come up. He added it was the final straw in a longterm matter which should have been dealt with previously. He said had he been president at the time Patterson received tenure (it was granted while Robert E. Naylor was president) he would not have voted to approve it.

The political overtones were repeated in comments favoring and opposing the recommendation to fire Patterson.

Ralph Pulley, attorney and member of First Church, Dallas, and who made the motion in the October 1984 meeting to curtail Dilday's comments on SBC politics, was the most vocal, at one point saying emphatically he would be heard even though a call to cut off discussion had been made.

Pulley questioned if Patterson had been given due process in the matter and moved early in the proceeding to open the matter for discussion to hear from some of Patterson's students and others, including retired professor Cal Guy.

Board Chairman Davis Cooper, pastor of University Hills Baptist Church, Denver, restricted participation in the discussion to trustees and administration. Pulley's motion to open it up failed.

It was noted most of the trustees had heard the full discussion of the charges, including testimony by Patterson, at the meeting of the academic affairs committee the evening before. The meeting had gone on until 12:45 a.m.

Pulley and others questioned the procedure followed in bringing the recommendation and the Dallas attorney noted many of the complaints were not of a recent nature and that the most recent student evaluation, which followed Patterson's first semester of teaching following sabbatical in 1982-83, had been good.

Dean of Theology William Tolar, while acknowledging the general student evaluation of Patterson had been good, said Patterson's performance was rated by the students at 50 percent of that of other faculty members, and that he had discussed with Patterson the charges that he often came to class "totally unprepared" and had used "abusive, vulgar language."

Other questions were raised by John McKay, music evangelist and member of Glenview Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas, who compared the treatment of Patterson to the "inquisition" of Jesus; Bill Grubbs, member of First Baptist Church, Dallas, who voiced concern over the system of review, the lack of what he saw as "formal documentation" of the charge and the incident with Vaught; Jim Bolton, also a member of First Church, Dallas, who said he had called Vaught, who he said was his former pastor and had a letter from him about the incident;

James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, who said he had talked to Patterson's pastor and was told he had not intended for his report on Patterson's churchmanship to be used to fire him; Hugo Lindquist, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, who cited "the political overtones" of the matter and told of positive reports from Patterson's former students;

Dr. Kenneth Lilly, member of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark., who questioned when Patterson's salary had been withheld, when he had been granted tenure and what "redemptive acts" had been initiated since the inquiry by Dilday;

Billy Tolbert, pastor of El Toro Baptist Church, El Toro, Calif., who said he had prayed about the matter and had talked with a student who attributed his ability to share the gospel with having been in Patterson's class. Tolbert said in light of that he could not support the recommendation to fire Patterson.

Others spoke in favor of the recommendation, including the committee chairman, Gurnells, who answered Draper's remarks about churchmanship, saying the other charges alone would justify Patterson's dismissal.

Stanley Hand, member of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., favored the recommendation, saying while the action was "unfortunate," a "professor is not doing his job, so President Dilday is doing his." He noted the committee was recommending Patterson be given a year's salary and fringe benefits. A person dismissed in secular business would be lucky to get two weeks' salary, he said.

Milton Cunningham, pastor of Westbury Baptist Church, Houston, cited the political nature of the discussion, and charged it had shifted from dealing with Patterson to "dealing with our president (Dilday)." He added, "It is no secret where this comes from. It comes out of one church," an apparent reference to First Church, Dallas, where Pulley, Grubbs and Bolton are members; which houses the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies headed by Paige Patterson, and whose pastor, W.A. Criswell, has criticized the outspokenness of seminary presidents in the SBC controversy. Cunningham said the seminary trustee meeting had a "hidden agenda."

The Houston pastor moved to close the discussion, prompting Pulley to insist he was "going to have time to respond," regardless of the action.

Others speaking for the recommendation included Stephen Hyde, pastor of First Baptist Church, Silver Spring, Md., who said he had been convinced by Patterson's testimony at the academic affairs committee hearing, which he said seemed to him to contain "half truths, innuendoes and real contempt for the administration."

The vote by secret ballot asked the trustees to vote "Yes" or "No" to the recommendation for dismissal. Twenty-one votes would have been required of the 31 present to sustain the recommendation. Cooper at first cast a ballot and then withdrew it when he was told he could vote only in case of a tie. Currently, there are 34 trustees. One recently has moved and is no longer eligible to serve and another was ill and unable to attend the meeting.

McKay opposed the secret ballot and also asked they be signed in case of legal action.

Later, rather than risk another split vote, the trustees by concensus asked the academic affairs committee to review the whole evaluation procedure and Patterson's future performance.

Dilday said Patterson would be returned to the classroom but the seminary would maintain the "highest expectations of Christian behavior, quality churchmanship, quality academic and scholarship work, a quality spirit of relationships and cooperation—the kind that now exists, the harmony and unity the faculty now has."

While acknowledging some doubtlessly had come to their decision to oppose the dismissal recommendation out of sincere conviction, Dilday blamed political considerations for others.

He said he could not believe the vote not to sustain the committee recommendation was an endorsement of Patterson's record, and added, "I don't think anyone of you would want to be... responsible for answering to Southern Baptists why you would endorse someone in this kind of key position in this seminary to the detriment of all the other faculty who stand so firm in their position."

Though he said he would not suggest there had been any coordinated effort by the 12 who voted against the recommendation, "I think behind your votes and decisions made here are the other complications of the political involvement of our convention, my own position in it, and in spite of several denials to the contrary, that is my only way of understanding or rationalizing how any one of the 12 could possibly have voted (the way you did)."

Pulley noted he had sent a memo to all the trustees following last October's meeting regarding Dilday's political involvement. He asked them to review that memo and encouraged them to write to Dilday.

Dilday said following the meeting he would review his political involvement.

The president told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, that in spite of the vote he did not consider it an indication of lack of confidence in his presidency and that he had given absolutely no consideration to resigning.

Dilday said March 22 he and Vice-President John Newport and Tolar had met the previous day with Patterson about a "re-engagement plan" to return him to the classroom. They sat down responses and conditions, Dilday said, under which the professor will return to his duties.

The vote of the trustees was not to fire Patterson, Dilday said, but it is the duty of the administration to follow through on his return to teaching.

After the vote rejecting his dismissal, Patterson told the Standard he was pleased with the action. He declined to say whether he plans legal action. Late Friday, after the meeting with Dilday, Newport and Tolar, Patterson issued a brief statement: "I deeply regret all this came up. Now I want to get back to work and do the best job I can with the students. I am grateful for those who supported me."

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(Druin, associate editor of the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, provided news coverage of the trustees meeting at the request of Baptist Press.)

Southwestern Seminary Trustees
Approve Near \$17 Million Budget

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, unanimously approved a record budget of almost \$17 million at their spring meeting March 18-20.

The 32-member board also dealt with recommendations on faculty and curriculum.

The budget--\$16,977,499 for the 1985-86 academic year--represents a 4.3 percent increase over the approximately \$16.3 million spending blueprint approved last year.

The board also okayed the creation of two professorships, the addition of a faculty member in the school of music and the addition of seven courses in the school of theology.

Trustees approved the permanently endowed Laneville-Hooten Professorship of Old Testament, established with a gift from the estates of deceased sisters Winnie Laneville and Ayleen Hooten of Fort Worth. David Garland, professor of Old Testament, was elected to the chair.

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Also approved was the Huber L. Drumwright Professorship of New Testament. Drumwright, who died in November 1981, was a professor of New Testament at Southwestern and was dean of the school of theology, 1973-80. At his death he was executive secretary of the Arkansas Baptist Convention. Virtus E. Gideon, professor of New Testament, will fill the professorship.

James David Robinson, who is studying for the doctor of musical arts degree at Southwestern, was elected to the faculty. He is an assistant professor of voice at William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., and earned both bachelor and master of music degrees from West Texas State University, Canyon.

Among the courses approved are "Southern Baptists and Issues of Society," "Strategies for Missions to Multi-Family Dwellings," "Strategies for Ethnic Church Ministry," "Evangelizing Adherents of Non-Christian Religious Movements" and "Contemporary Philosophical Issues."

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Bibles Behind Bars
Began With Need

By Frank Wm. White

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3/22/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Bibles Behind Bars began as a project of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board when Home Bible Study began receiving 30 requests per month from prisoners for Bibles and the Holman Division had a supply of slightly damaged Bibles to be given away.

Last December Holman gave the Home Bible Study staff about 200 Bibles which could not be sold because of damaged or imperfect covers and Home Bible Study agreed to answer the prisoner requests, according to Connie Scudder, assistant editor of Home Bible Study Guide.

However, an appeal was made in March to the 1,800 board employees to help provide Bibles for the project because the Holman supply would soon be depleted.

In a week-long collection project, Home Bible Study collected more than 700 Bibles, Testaments and Gospels from board employees for distribution to prisoners, Scudder said.

Although the number of Bibles donated are enough to last about two years at the current rate of requests, they probably will be gone much sooner, predicted Mildred Heinicke, letter analyst for Home Bible Study, who answers the requests for Bibles.

"Usually when we get a request from one prison, we'll start getting more from there," she explained. "The more you send out, the more you need," she said.

Requests come from prisons all across the nation. Only requests from individual prisoners are honored, Scudder said, explaining a Bible is sent only if a prisoner specifically asks for one. If the person is not receiving the free Home Bible Study Guide, his name is added.

Some prisoners will ask for a particular version. Those requests are honored when possible, she said. "The letters are really sincere. You can tell by reading them that they want some help and are looking for something," she said.

Because of the continuing need and the positive response from board employees the project will probably be an annual event, Scudder said.

She added some employees had asked about getting their churches involved in the project. "We hoped that would happen even though we didn't suggest it. We'd like to see others get involved," Scudder said.

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