



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 18, 1990

90-91

SBC Executive Committee action  
terminates Shackelford and Martin

NASHVILLE (BP)--In executive session Tuesday morning, July 17, the SBC Executive Committee voted 45 to 15, with 1 abstention, to terminate the employment of two Baptist Press employees -- Al Shackelford, vice president for public relations and Dan Martin, news editor.

A June 29 letter from Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president, had informed Executive Committee members of a called meeting for the purpose of considering the termination of these employees.

At the conclusion of the meeting, held in the SBC Building in Nashville, Sam Pace, chairman of the Executive Committee, issued the following printed statement, without comment, to press representatives who were present:

The Executive Committee met today to consider in private a matter which has had much public attention. We chose to meet in executive session even while recognizing the intense interest of Southern Baptists in matters which concern their right to information and a free press. We held these deliberations in private to preserve the Executive Committee's privilege of conducting a full and free debate on personnel matters without fear of causing our employees a legal injury. The Executive Committee has previously declared that it must address some subjects privately in order to address them completely but with respect for the rights of others:

It is further understood that the Executive Committee and its subcommittees have the right and responsibility to conduct executive sessions in unusual circumstances, such as the consideration of certain delicate personality and personnel matters which could not be handled wisely in open session without unnecessarily embarrassing individuals. (Press Relations Policy for Meetings of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, adopted September 22, 1985)

Today the Executive Committee felt the need to permit its members to debate the Southern Baptist Convention's business freely, without fear that lawsuits would be filed against them for expressing their opinions and without fear that their comments would needlessly damage the professional reputations of two Christian journalists. Our meeting was a time when all Executive Committee members could freely express themselves, and Al Shackelford and Dan Martin could express their own views without interruption. This could not be done in a public forum.

We believe in the fundamental need for Southern Baptists to know how we are conducting ourselves and their business. We chose the only course open to us which secured our right to unrestrained debate, which protected the reputations of Christian brothers from false or defamatory attacks, which preserved our responsibility to keep our Convention free from expensive and destructive litigation, and which would diminish the efforts on the part of any group to suppress the Cooperative Program. The Executive Committee affirms the value of a Southern Baptist Press which honors the virtues of objectivity, credibility, balance, and Christian deportment in journalistic pursuits.

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Al Shackleford and Dan Martin have a number of additional years to serve our Lord, and probably, our Convention as well. To bring public charges and hear defenses and counter-charges would be damaging to Al and Dan as well as to our Executive Committee and to our denomination. Most are convinced that such a procedure would not bring us together. Accordingly, the Executive Committee has voted by a margin of three to one to terminate Al Shackleford and Dan Martin from their duties at the Executive Committee and Baptist Press effective immediately. The Executive Committee has approved a severance arrangement for these men which provides for them to continue receiving their full salaries plus their normal retirement, medical insurance, and life insurance benefits for a period of seven months, which includes accrued vacation.

Our Executive Committee has taken this action and is now ready to continue to focus our energies on the ministries that are calling out for Southern Baptists to fulfill.

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BP director responds  
to SBC Executive Committee

Baptist Press  
7/18/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Responding to an invitation of the SBC Executive Committee's administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee to make a five-minute statement, Alvin C. Shackleford, vice president for public relations, said that as a journalist committed to openness he could not, in good conscience, participate in a closed executive session.

The invitation and the response came as the subcommittee, meeting in closed executive session in Nashville July 17, prepared to recommend to the Executive Committee that Shackleford and Dan Martin, news editor, be terminated immediately.

Shackleford proceeded to say that "as an employee, I submit to you my written statement to do with as you please." The written statement is as follows:

STATEMENT TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND CONVENTION ARRANGEMENTS SUBCOMMITTEE

Forty-one months ago I had the privilege of sharing with this Executive Committee my testimony and "My Philosophy of Christian Journalism." The subject on that day was the same as today -- my employment as Vice-President for Public Relations.

My testimony has not changed. I had the great blessing of being born into a Christian family with strong Baptist ties. Through the witness of my third grade school teacher, I was saved at age nine. I was baptized and ordained to the gospel ministry by First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Ga. At that church, I publicly declared that God had called me into His ministry -- a ministry that God later directed into Christian journalism.

After graduating from Mercer University, I sought to prepare for that ministry by obtaining a journalism degree at the University of Georgia and a theology degree at Southwestern seminary.

For 35 years, I have worked for Southern Baptist organizations in Christian journalism.

Just as my testimony and commitment to God's call has not changed, neither has "my philosophy of Christian journalism." Therefore, let me share with you what I said on this subject on February 17, 1987.

"I am a life-long Southern Baptist who is convinced that God has shared with us the best possible organization for advancing His Kingdom through missions and evangelism. God has led our churches to organize and operate under a democratic system which is obedient to God's Holy Spirit. This system is built around two tremendous Baptist principles -- priesthood of the believer and autonomy of the local church.

"As our denomination organized into associations, state conventions, and the national convention, extreme care was exercised to preserve these two Baptist principles.

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"I believe that Baptists -- individually and collectively -- can and will make the proper decisions when they have a fair, unbiased, objective presentation of the issues involved.

"I have long held to the historic Baptist adage, 'Tell the truth and trust the people.' For this adage to operate properly, Baptist leaders -- whether in a church or a denominational body -- must fairly and objectively present all information to the members or messengers who will make the decision.

"A part of my trust of the Baptist system is that Baptists -- the person in the pew -- can be trusted with the truth -- even when that truth is unpleasant. I believe Baptist state papers and Baptist Press itself must be as open and honest as possible with grassroots Baptists. Our people are smart enough to understand and to interpret for themselves the significance of an event or issue.

"Having an ultimate responsibility to all Baptists requires that Baptist journalists must be open to all opinions from all Baptists. No opinion by any Baptist anywhere is unimportant.

"Christian journalism, then, requires that the motive for communication must be to inform the reader -- rather than satisfy the desires of the communicator."

I closed that statement 41 months ago by pledging, "These are the principles I have sought to fulfill during my years in Baptist journalism. If you and the Lord choose to entrust me with this new responsibility, I will continue to let them guide me."

There have been changes since that snowy day in February 1987, but the two convictions that led me here have not changed: (1) God had clearly revealed to me that it was His will that I accept this position; and (2) my God-called ministry is based on Baptists' right to the free flow of information. These two convictions are based on my belief in and love for the Bible, which I believed to be God's inerrant word, long before I ever heard the word "inerrancy."

The real issue you face today is not the control of Baptist Press nor its director, but the control of the right and responsibility of Baptist church members to know what is going on in their denomination.

Throughout our history, Baptists have adhered to the principle of "freedom of conscience." We have trusted our Baptist church members with the right to discern truth and, on the basis of that discernment, the responsibility to make proper decisions.

Your vote today must not be based on your perception of the journalistic abilities of Dan Martin and me, but on our commitment to trust our fellow Baptists and on your willingness to allow their right to discern truth as presented to them through an objective, free news service.

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BP news editor anticipated  
dismissal by Executive Committee

Baptist Press  
7/18/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--When Dan Martin, Baptist Press news editor terminated July 17 by the SBC Executive Committee, was given five minutes to speak to the Executive Committee in the closed session convened for the purpose of considering his termination, he presented a written statement that assumed the dismissal that followed two hours later.

A two-sentence oral statement introduced a written statement that was distributed to the committee members. "As a journalist committed to openness, I cannot, in good conscience, participate in your closed executive session. As an employee, I submit to you my written statement to do with as you please."

Martin's written statement, which follows, concluded with he acknowledgement that the votes were in place for his dismissal and "the responsibility of the freedom of Baptist Press shifts totally to you today."

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The full text of Martin's statement is as follows:

Statement of Dan Martin  
SBC Executive Committee  
July 17, 1990

Ten years ago next month I came to Baptist Press. I came with a sense of commitment, of excitement and gratitude. I came committed to living out my calling as a Christian journalist; committed to providing the very best Baptist Press possible. I was committed to serving the true constituency of BP, the person in the pew, who prays for, works for and gives to the work of the Southern Baptist Convention. Providing them the most free, the most accurate and most balanced news possible has been my aim and my goal.

I wanted a BP that was fair to all, accessible to all and useful to all. In fact, in my first week on the job, I called the two leaders of the conservative resurgence and told them, "I do not guarantee that you will like everything that I do, but I do guarantee I will be as fair as is humanly possible to be. I will always give you an opportunity to respond, and you will have access to the news service of the Southern Baptist Convention." I have lived by that commitment.

I was excited because this is the best journalism job in the SBC. From here, I have seen first hand the events, personalities and activities of the SBC through these 10 years. It has been an exciting time personally and professionally.

I am grateful to Southern Baptists for having provided me this opportunity and this responsibility. I want to thank you for having allowed me to be news editor of Baptist Press for these 10 years.

I have had the opportunity of working with some of God's choice people. Across the convention, in the Executive Committee and within our on staff, the people with whom I have worked have ministered to me, taught me, loved me, cared about me, prayed for me. They have allowed me to minister to them, teach them, love them, care about them and pray for them.

In the BP staff, my co-workers are marvelous people: Doris Elliott, whom I call Mom because she is loving and giving; Polly House, a co-worker in every sense of the word; Maria Sykes, who has tackled difficult jobs and always smiles; Al Shackelford has been both a professional colleague and a treasured friend.

Harold C. Bennett has given his support to me personally and his help to me professionally. He has helped us to provide a free, credible, trustworthy and autonomous Baptist Press. Before this issue, he has never exercised his authority to direct Baptist Press.

Baptist Press is a news service. The purpose of a news service is to inform, inspire, educate and even entertain its constituents. The events and personalities should be understandable to the person in the pew, who must have accurate information on which to base informed decisions. Sometimes the facts are hard and difficult, but never require intentional injury or hurt to individuals. In the words of Paul, we have not rejoiced in iniquity, but have rejoiced in the truth.

To use the analogies being discussed, BP is not a photo, but rather more like a series of photos. Stories have a broader focus than a photograph, trying to be more comprehensive rather than a one-shot, through-the-lens look at things. Neither is BP a press secretary for the convention. Press secretaries promote their particular view, or, in the language of modern politics, put the spin on events. News services attempt to fairly and factually report those same events.

I have attempted to follow three basic rules: First, tell the truth and trust the people. Second, report the news without fear or favor. Third, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

You may change the nature of Baptist Press. However, be aware that if you do, it may no longer be a news service of integrity. You have the power to change it, but be sure the change will be noted by the press and the people. You will be responsible for the result.

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As we come to this place in our walk together, I regret that you have not had the opportunity to know me, that you know me only by perception, but not in fact. Many of you know me only through my pen as news editor.

I wish you had been able to know me in other ways. I would have appreciated preaching in your churches because I love to preach and would have liked the opportunity to tell you and your people about my own experiences with the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

I wish that we had prayed together because I needed you to pray with me and for me.

I wish you knew my wife, Colleen, a wonderful woman through whom the love of God has flowed into my life. I wish you know my grandson Byron, whom we adopted a year ago after a family crisis made his mother unable to provide for him.

The responsibility of the freedom of Baptist Press shifts totally to you today.

As I conclude, I want to use a benediction you have heard many times: May God bless you and keep you; may His face shine upon you and give you wisdom. Amen.....

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Missionaries stranded as quake  
relief begins in Philippines

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
7/18/90

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines (BP)--Five Southern Baptist mission workers and several Philippine Baptists remained stranded July 18 on a road leading into Baguio City, Philippines, after the July 16 earthquake in the area.

The mission workers -- Robert and Janet Nash, John and Helen Thomas and Julia (Judy) Yost -- were traveling on the southern route into Baguio City when the temblor, measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale, hit about 4:30 p.m. July 16. The quake killed close to 300 people, according to news reports.

Nash is from Athens, Ga.; Mrs. Nash is from Cornelia, Ga. Thomas is from Montgomery, Ala.; Mrs. Thomas is from Louisville, Ala. Yost is from Naples, N.Y.

Yost and a Philippine Baptist woman were traveling home from Manila and the others were returning from preaching services at Clark Air Base, according to reports.

Southern Baptist mission officials received reports that the workers were not injured, but have been unable to travel on the road because of landslides caused by the quake.

"We are having to assume some things," said Sam Waldron, administrator for the Southern Baptist missionary organization in the Philippines. "We do know food and medical supplies have been dropped into the area by helicopter. We're assuming that there are more people than just this group."

Mission officials were trying to get a helicopter into the area to evacuate the Baptist group, but all available helicopters were being used for emergency needs, said Waldron. Reports on the group came from U.S. Embassy contacts and through a phone call from a person affiliated with Voice of America based at Clark Air Base, said Waldron.

By July 18, mission officials had heard from all Southern Baptist missionaries in the area hit by the quake except for Terry and Michaelle Buford in Urdaneta, about 30 miles south of Baguio. Buford is from Bells, Tenn. Mrs. Buford is from Elgin, N.D.

Two relief teams of Southern Baptist missionaries were to travel July 19 from Manila to San Jose and Baguio City, two areas heavily damaged by the quake, Waldron said. One of the teams will check on the Bufords. Officials think the Bufords haven't been able to contact other missionaries because of downed phone lines in the area.

Each relief team has received \$5,000 in disaster relief funds that probably will be used for food, medicine and temporary shelter for quake victims, said Waldron. Team members will work with Philippine Baptists and missionaries in the area to assess needs. The teams also will take emergency supplies into the areas, Waldron said.

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Southern Baptist missionary David Cartwright will lead a team into Baguio, traveling on the only passable road into the city.

In Baguio, some damage has been reported at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, said John Ingouf, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator. Ingouf said several dormitories at the seminary may have to be condemned because of damages sustained in the quake. Reports indicated no students were injured.

The Southern Baptist mission office in Manila sustained minor damage, including some cracks in the building, Waldron said.

In San Jose, the home of Southern Baptist missionaries Dennis and Linda Singletary was damaged, but the family has not had to evacuate, Waldron said. The family's water tower also was damaged; they have no running water or electricity but do have phone service, he said.

In Cabanatuan City, where the quake was centered, the Christian College of the Philippines collapsed, reportedly killing at least 49 people and trapping many more. Waldron said some Baptist students may attend the school, but no reports have been received yet.

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Christians pushing for  
Angolan democracy

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
7/18/90

LUANDA, Angola (BP)--Evangelical churches in Angola are publicly challenging the ruling communists to abandon their monopoly on power and lead the country toward multiparty democracy.

The Association of Evangelicals in Angola and the Angolan Council of Evangelical Churches declared the time has come to "abandon the general principles of Marxist-Leninism" since "democracy is the destiny of humanity."

The declaration was contained in a five-page letter to President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, the national assembly and the minister of culture, who oversees religious groups.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who has led the Soviet Union into the turbulent waters of perestroika (restructuring), was quoted extensively in the letter.

Angola is the last staunchly Marxist state in Africa. Benin has renounced communism, Mozambique has partially embraced a market economy and Ethiopia has removed portraits and statues of Marx, Lenin and Engels from public areas.

"We see much openness in our country and we want radical change. We want a multiparty democracy," explained David N'Kozi, general secretary of the Baptist Convention of Angola. But the churches see the wisdom of gradual pursuit of that goal and a guiding role for the government, he said.

Baptists joined Reform, Congregational, Methodist, Brethren and Pentecostal groups in issuing the April letter. No official reaction has come from the government, but N'Kozi thinks some results are becoming evident.

"For years we have been trying to recover Baptist convention property which was nationalized in 1975, with no response," he said. "But in May we were invited to come in and talk about that very issue. Also, for months we have been unable to get approval to buy concrete and iron sheets for building and repairing churches and suddenly we have been allowed to buy a large supply of both."

Evangelicals followed the lead of Angolan Catholics, who issued their own call for democracy last December. That action drew heated attacks from the state-controlled newspaper, which said churches should stay out of politics and concentrate on religion, according to N'Kozi. The newspaper has not commented on the evangelicals' letter.

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The evangelical churches formally requested the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) to set, announce and adhere to a "calendar for evolution of democracy."

However, the letter also recognized the MPLA's monopoly role in the immediate future as the "first stage to make the necessary preparations for the transition."

The churches said they felt "the necessity to participate in the transformation" of the country's political system and had earned the right to do so, "having had a part in the important struggle" for Angolan independence from Portugal.

Opening other routes of political expression would aid efforts toward a negotiated peace in the civil war that has devastated the country for the past 15 years, the document stressed, and help root out the massive public corruption burdening Angolan citizens. UNITA (the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), the MPLA's adversary in the civil war, was not mentioned by name.

"The fundamental problem is the war," the letter said. "It not only kills our people but impedes progress. ... No changes will produce the desired results unless peace is realized. ... With peace the population will become self-sufficient ... as people become willing to cultivate and transport their products" without fear of attack.

The letter urged the MPLA to engage in "self-criticism" of damages it has caused churches since 1975 and to "study profoundly" changes in the government structure. The churches said such actions would benefit the country if "the party would surrender its political monopoly."

One-party systems, the letter continued, "develop the tendency to defend themselves against any opposition." In Africa, one-party systems "have resulted in the domination of one tribal group over others" and "have maintained a great and costly corruption" while spending lavishly for "military security to defend the ruling regime against the very people they are trying to govern."

"With some exceptions, Angola seems to be following the same path," the letter pointed out, noting that other socialist countries have been "speaking a great deal about helping man but doing nothing to help that man."

The nation's high inflation rate is partially caused by "the equally high rate of corruption," the churches insisted. "No citizen receives governmental services to which they have a right without paying bribes ... and only massive reforms in the entire system can do away with existent evils."

Specific changes called for by the churches included scrapping the requirement that all public office holders be members of the MPLA; revocation of all laws discriminating against churches and limiting their participation in the life of the country, such as nationalization of church hospitals and schools; and limiting of MPLA activities on Sundays, when mandatory rallies often conflict with scheduled church services.

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'Winner take all' would result  
if SBC splits, says Paschall

By James H. Cox

Baptist Press  
7/18/90

AURORA, Ky. (BP)--A split in the Southern Baptist Convention would be "difficult, if not impossible" to achieve, former SBC president H. Franklin Paschall theorized.

In light of domination of the convention by conservatives at last month's SBC meeting in New Orleans, both conservatives and moderates have suggested one solution to the differences is to divide the house.

But Paschall, SBC president from 1966 to 1968, said he would not recommend a split. He discussed the situation in an interview July 10 at Jonathan Creek Baptist Assembly in Aurora, Ky., where he addressed the Pendergraph Conference.

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For one thing, "the loser goes away with nothing," he said, noting the loser would have to "start all over again."

"We agree on too many things to break up," Paschall continued. He cited belief in basic biblical and theological truth and a program of missions.

At the same time, Paschall, placed major responsibility for peace squarely on the shoulders of conservatives.

Conservatives are in control, and they have the opportunity and ability to consolidate their gains and include all Southern Baptists in their planning, said Paschall. They have "won the war" and a winner "can afford to be magnanimous," he added.

Yet, he warned, to follow the path of total domination will ultimately destroy the Southern Baptist Convention "as we have known it."

Paschall, a retired minister whose pastorates have included the First Baptist churches of Bowling Green and Nashville, said that one point of view had never uniformly dominated the SBC and "it cannot be achieved now."

He admitted, however, that this mindset exists "among some conservative leaders -- but not all." He said he hoped to see more openness and inclusiveness. Yet he cited "distressing fallout" in fellowship, and it is "all but certain fallout" will afflict Cooperative Program unified budget support.

Conservatives are asking for "taxation without representation," he explained. "There's really no other way to put it."

Paschall said he was not ready to give up on the idea of Baptists cooperating together, although he definitely is more pessimistic than he was two years ago.

The only way for the denomination to remain united is "in Christ as revealed in the Bible," he said. Southern Baptists need to do their work



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