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December 21, 1992

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KENTUCKY -- 9 Southern Seminary students protest trustee activities.
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9 Southern Seminary students
protest trustee activities

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
12/21/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Nine student leaders have issued an open letter to trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary protesting "excessive expenditures" on, and "the secretive nature" of, trustee meetings "and the continual upheaval caused by such actions."

The president and two vice presidents of the seminary's Student Government Association were among signers of the Dec. 17 letter, which was faxed to news media.

The letter was issued two days after a closed meeting in Atlanta in which seminary trustees rejected a proposal to pay tenured ethics professor Paul Simmons \$362,000 to leave the faculty.

Simmons has come under fire for his support of abortion rights and his views on homosexuality. He has been quoted, for example, as saying "God is pro-choice" and has penned brochures circulated by the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. Simmons holds a Ph.D. from Southern and has been a faculty member there 23 years.

Trustee chairman Wayne Allen, a Cordova, Tenn., pastor, told Baptist Press he intends to issue a response to the students' letter after the Christmas holidays and after consulting with the seminary's administration.

"It's regrettable that the students would seek to communicate by means of public correspondence," Allen said. "I had journalists contacting me for a response before I ever received the letter. The press is not the best means, nor the most Christian means, of communicating. I do plan to respond personally to the students who have expressed concern."

In their letter, the students allege trustees have spent "large amounts of money" investigating Simmons, including several meetings of the trustees' academic personnel committee and a special subcommittee, for which participating trustees are reimbursed travel expenses; \$10,000 for a legal opinion from the seminary's attorney, which, according to the students, advised the board it had no grounds for pursuing Simmons' dismissal; between \$10,000 to \$50,000 on a second legal opinion; and \$25,000 for the meeting in Atlanta attended by 55 trustees and four administrators.

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The students contended "this issue is broader than one professor and one ethical issue. We question what new ethical issue, scholarly opinion or doctrine will become a test of fellowship?"

In a paragraph concerning trust, the students wrote, "On more than one occasion trustees have expressed the desire to have an open relationship with students that is based on trust. But the secretive, distant activities of the board only increase the level of distrust that has plagued this seminary for the past several years. If the board is serious about student concerns, and if they hope to have a healthy, candid relationship with the seminary community, they must exhibit candor themselves. Meetings such as the one on December 15 serve to further alienate many members of the seminary community."

Concerning Simmons, the students wrote seminary President Roy Honeycutt "has repeatedly assured the trustees that Dr. Paul Simmons teaches in accordance with the Abstract of Principles," a doctrinal statement signed by faculty members.

Signers of the open letter were four Student Government Association officers, Ruth Davison, president; Amanda Hiley, vice president-treasurer; Chris Townsend, vice president; and Stacey Buford, spiritual life chair; and five others, Eileen Campbell-Reed, vice president of the M.Div. Council; Kathleen Stewart, Christian Education Council president; Michelle Tooley, Graduate Club president; Tommy Fitzgerald, Music School Executive Committee president; and Hope Straughan, Organization of Student Social Workers president.

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Mike Hawkins says his AIDS
is being used in God's will

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
12/21/92

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Twice in the last year, Mike Hawkins was at the point of death. Twice God delivered him.

Even with such miraculous healing, though, the prognosis is not good because Hawkins has AIDS.

There are several ways people can catch AIDS -- blood transfusions or sharing hypodermic needles or sexual contact with an infected person. Hawkins caught it while living a homosexual lifestyle, a lifestyle he had left behind before he was diagnosed with the disease.

Hawkins said his personal troubles began as a small boy, when "Satan attacked my mind with thoughts that I was 'weird' because I was a boy. I didn't get a good understanding that the differences between boys and girls were natural, normal -- the way God designed the universe. Satan used that weak area of my life.

"Most boys go through a time when they think girls are 'yucky.' I internalized that and thought I was 'yucky.'"

Although he emphasized that this was not true in his case, Hawkins said many boys who turn to a homosexual lifestyle do so because there is no strong male figure in their lives. Some are in single-parent homes, some in homes where the father is a workaholic and never around.

"They need their daddies to hug them, to kiss them, to be a godly male influence," he said.

If there is no such influence, when children are developing their sexual identities during ages 8-11, he said that need for love from their fathers becomes eroticized. Some boys deal with it by becoming overly masculine and participating in "manly" sports and activities; others deal with it by having many love relationships with women; still others deal with it by turning to homosexuality.

"I believe that 80 percent of the males in our society as a whole feel a lack of male compassion and have difficulty in relating with other men," Hawkins said. "We as men all have an emotional side but we suppress it because it's not 'masculine.'"

Hawkins said children are not born homosexuals but are led astray gradually over many years.

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"Nobody wakes up one day and says, 'I want to be a homosexual,'" he said. "They fall into it gradually. Coming out of it is also the same gradual process. I had a lifetime developing ideas about sexuality, whether right or wrong, so it takes time. But we need to leave all sin behind, whether it is lying or coveting or homosexuality."

While he was living a homosexual lifestyle, Hawkins said his parents never stopped praying for him. That eventually led to him disavowing homosexuality.

"While involved in homosexuality, I always had questions about how it related to my Christian lifestyle," he said. "The Scriptures say you can't serve two masters. I finally came to the understanding that I had to make a choice for God or a choice for homosexuality. To have a consistent joy and peace in my life could only come from God."

Hawkins came out of the homosexual lifestyle in January 1987. In 1988 he was diagnosed with AIDS.

"I had a full year of developing my relationship with Christ that allowed me to approach AIDS with a great deal more security, peace and hope," he said. "I think that God can use this disease of AIDS in many people's lives as a catalyst to get them to seek God. I do not think AIDS is a plague, but God created everything that lives, and I think God has placed it in the world to teach us that anything outside his perfect will provides death."

"If you stay within God's will, for the most part you remain free from those things."

In December 1991, Hawkins came down with histoplasmosis and was given 48 hours to live. He had been living in Arkansas but returned home to Oklahoma City to die.

As his church, family and friends united in prayer, he recovered. In April, he said he began seeking God's direction in his life.

"As a result of my illness last year I was uprooted from everything I had set up for myself," he said. "I left my job, my car, my friends and even my pet dog in Arkansas. All those things I left behind:

"It completely altered the direction I was going."

He decided to continue whatever God had planned for his life by helping out with AIDS victims. He soon noticed, though, that the organization where he worked was only ministering to physical needs.

"I realized the need for a ministry to reach out to people with AIDS, to share the love of Christ first, then minister to their physical needs," he said. "I realized there was no support group for people separated from friends and family by AIDS. I felt the need to get Southern Baptist churches to develop an avenue of support."

So Hawkins called First Stone Ministries, an Oklahoma City ministry that helps men and women come out of the homosexual lifestyle. He didn't know if they could use an AIDS counselor, but First Stone's leaders had been praying for someone to minister to AIDS victims.

First Stone provides counseling, support groups and encourages a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In cooperation with First Stone, Hawkins developed the Christian AIDS Network (CAN), which provides resources to churches about the disease.

"Our goal is to get churches involved," Hawkins said. "We don't want to be the only source of involvement -- we want other people involved, too."

He said CAN is growing "by leaps and bounds" and he is now speaking in churches across the area. CAN is getting certified as an HIV testing site and a scholarship fund has been established to provide AIDS education in high schools. There is also an AIDS conference scheduled in May and two support groups have been formed -- one for people with AIDS and one for families of people with AIDS.

"It is so important for me to get involved, because between 1988-91 our family kept silent about my illness," Hawkins said. "We were so afraid of the rejection we might face. I want to provide an environment that is safe for people to talk about it, and to receive prayer support."

Although God has not healed him from the AIDS virus, Hawkins said there are other more important issues.

"God has the power to eliminate it in anyone who is infected," Hawkins said. "The real question is not whether God will heal my physical body from AIDS, but rather how he has healed my spiritual body.

"It should be our purpose, whether we have cancer or heart disease or any ailment, to seek what would serve God the most."

He quoted from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, where Paul talks about his thorn in the flesh.

"God's answer to him was that his grace was sufficient," Hawkins said. "When we're weak, he is strong.

"I've seen God's healing power more than once in my own life. He's healed my family relationships and my relationships with others.

"Then last year he healed me of histoplasmosis," Hawkins added. "I was given 48 hours to live. Through the intervention of the body of Christ I was healed. More recently, in November I came down with pneumocystis pneumonia," which kills many AIDS victims.

The normal treatment is two to four weeks in the hospital, and the disease weakens the body tremendously.

Hawkins decided he would use home care and prayer for his treatment. "In three days I was back to normal," he said. "That is the power of prayer.

"Certainly God does seek to heal our physical bodies, but it just has to be our prayer that he be honored," Hawkins said. "It has to be our desire first to serve Christ.

"If God heals everybody of everything all the time, when are we going to die? The focus is not on how we are going to die, but how we're going to live."

Hawkins said CAN is available to churches wanting speakers on dealing with AIDS. CAN can provide speakers, music, licensed preachers; its phone number is (405) 525-FREE (3733).

"We cover what our Christian response should be -- church AIDS policies and how to respond to children with AIDS"

"AIDS is a tool that God is using to get us to show compassion," he added. "The thing about AIDS is people are afraid to get involved. We are afraid of giving the image to the community that we are condoning homosexuality. But we can have compassion and maintain our conviction that the Word of God is true.

"We don't have to sacrifice those beliefs or values by getting involved. By not getting involved, we are condemning people with this disease to eternity in hell.

"Jesus spent time in the homes of prostitutes, tax collectors, thieves and murderers," Hawkins noted. "We need to have the same kind of compassion that he had. Somehow, as Southern Baptists we have gotten away from following his example.

"There is such a barrage of sinful influence that we don't get involved in the lives of people; but, getting involved with people does not mean getting involved in their lifestyle."

The only way to stop the spread of AIDS is to get people to change their lifestyles, he said.

"We need to quit talking about 'safe sex' and start talking about 'God's sex,'" he said. "It is a real challenge and opportunity for our churches to have an impact on the entire world. We have a real opportunity as Southern Baptists to take the lead."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger.

Oklahoma's Native American v.p.
wants to serve all Baptists

By Dave Parker

SEMINOLE, Okla. (BP)--When Bill Barnett was elected first vice president at the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma in November, many people were surprised.

The most surprised was Barnett.

A full-blooded Muscogee (Creek) Indian, Barnett became the first Native American ever elected to a statewide office in the BGCO.

Although aware of his unique status, he rejected the idea of being a spokesman for Indians.

"I believe that God's people elect their people to serve. I want to be able to serve all our Baptist people in our state."

But, he added, "This year being 'The Year of the Indian,' it's in season to be Indian."

Barnett said he was very surprised at the outcome, because "there are a lot of capable people out there. I don't think we were trying to make a statement -- we just wanted Indians to be visible in whatever way we can, to show people we are here and have been here since before statehood.

"Over the years we have had a lot of capable Indian people but for whatever reason no one was ever elected."

This year, a group of Indian leaders met and decided to nominate someone for statewide office. Barnett planned to nominate another man, but Jimmy Anderson, Indian church planter for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said he wanted to nominate Barnett.

Barnett is pastor of the church he founded in 1975, Indian Nations Baptist Church near Seminole. The church has 169 resident members, averages 41 in attendance and its total tithes and offerings in 1991 were \$25,645. He was elected over Bobby Boyles, pastor of First Baptist Church in Moore, which has 4,397 resident members, averages 2,017 in attendance and had \$2,691,505 in tithes and offerings for 1991. It also leads the state in gifts through the Cooperative Program, giving \$318,639 last year.

Faced with such a worthy opponent, the Indian men planned to nominate Barnett for second vice president after he lost the first race.

"We thought we would come back in the second round and get double exposure that way," Barnett recounted. "Plus, we thought we had an outside chance at second vice president."

That became a moot point when he was elected.

"We are not clamoring for change," Barnett said. "There are a lot of good people who have known that good Native American people are here." Over the years, many Native Americans have served on BGCO boards and committees.

One way he hopes to help tribes is to encourage development for things other than "sin" revenue, such as gambling and tax-free cigarettes.

"A lot of our tribes have gone into ventures with gambling and so forth," he said. "It is a temporary thing, but it does bring them instant revenue. It is difficult for some of us; we know what we should and should not participate in, but the revenues are no doubt helping Indians in terms of providing homes and health programs.

"We have benefitted, but that doesn't make it right."

He said he is afraid such enterprises will ultimately jeopardize the sovereignty of the tribes.

"It will not go on forever," he said. "It will be shut down in one way or another. I would like to see them develop a program that will benefit our people."

One possibility, he said, would be for the tribes to build an amusement park in Oklahoma similar to Six Flags Over Texas.

"That would be a positive thing for the state," he said. "Enough employment would be generated to be good for everybody."

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While pastor of Indian Nations, Barnett said he has tried to develop young men in his congregation into preachers, and many now help at his church and at Indian Nations (formerly New Trinity) in Oklahoma City, which he helped reopen in July.

"It is kind of like an xtension of our church in Seminole," Barnett said. "The last census showed there are a large number of Native Americans moving into the cities, literally thousands moving (to Oklahoma City). There are only five Indian congregations in the city; we could easily have another half dozen churches.

"Most of our churches are looking for ministers. A large percentage of our Indian pastors are over age 60. We have a lot of capable young men coming along, but they need some seasoning."

One problem always present in Native American work is the ties with native religions but Barnett said that is nothing new.

"So many of our people are still in a relationship to their native religion, but Paul had the same problem," he noted. "Our people are very religious, but that is the same problem Paul faced in Athens."

In reaching Indians for Christ, though, he said there must be an understanding of how their culture and religion are intertwined.

"When you find Indian people in cities and there are Indian activities, it kind of draws them together," he said.

After graduating from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, he was saved in 1958 just before hitchhiking to California. While in California he became active in a church and surrendered to preach. He received his master's degree from Northeastern and moved to the University of New Mexico to work on a doctorate. While working on his dissertation, health problems forced him to quit, and he ended up working on the UNM staff. In 1975, he was hired to work at Oklahoma Baptist University and was on the staff five years.

"I've been bivocational all of my ministry, for 30 years," Barnett said. "The Lord's been good to me, providing me jobs as a teacher, coach, director of athletics and counselor." He now is a counselor at Langston University. He and wife, Mary Jo, have four daughters, one son and three grandsons.

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger.

Former Jim Jones aide becomes
soul-winner for biblical faith By Cynthia Wright

Baptist Press
12/21/92

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (BP)--When Jim Jones led more than 900 people in committing suicide in Guyana in 1978, the leader of the San Francisco-based People's Temple, Hattie Newell, lost 12 family members.

Newell, a licensed vocational nurse, is now a member at Immanuel Baptist Church in San Bernardino.

"If anyone ever had a reason not to trust the Lord, it's Hattie," said John Welch, minister of administration at Immanuel.

"She lost her family while serving in what she believed was a Christian organization but she is now a soul-winner who ministers to everyone," Welch added.

Newell became involved with the People's Temple in Los Angeles when members of her Baptist church began fighting among themselves. At the invitation of a friend, Newell's aunt and mother began attending the People's Temple with their children.

"I wish I had followed my father," she said thoughtfully. "He got up and walked out the first time he visited."

Eventually, Newell moved to San Francisco where she acted as companion and personal bodyguard to Jones' wife, Marc line.

When Jones traveled to Guyana, Newell's family, including brothers and sisters ranging in age from 11 to 15, accompanied him.

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Newell believes God had other plans for her. "I kept trying to go," she remembered, "but Jim Jones never would let me. Every time I would think of a reason to go, he would tell me to send someone else."

Two of her brothers left Guyana before the Nov. 18, 1978, mass suicide, one of them that very morning.

After the tragedy she remained in San Francisco for a time, continuing her work with the People's Temple. At the request of family members, she finally returned to Los Angeles, beginning a period of drifting and struggling for answers.

In 1982, her life took a new direction when a friend invited her to visit Immanuel Baptist, where she heard pastor Rob Zinn speak on the topic, "Would you love God even if you never got an answer?"

Newell found the church to be the place where she would begin to find some answers to her questions. "I had been asking myself, 'How did this happen to me?'" she recalled.

In 1990, after several years of serving the church as a layperson and continuing her nursing career, Newell began a formal ministry of her own, which she calls "Exhortation Faith Intercession Ministry." Her goal through EFI is to encourage others to strengthen themselves through biblical knowledge.

Her experiences, not only with the People's Temple, but with sexual abuse during her childhood, motivates her to concentrate on the importance of educating youth.

"I wasn't nurtured when I thought I became a Christian at the age of 11. I lacked sufficient knowledge of the Bible and, as a result, was almost destroyed," she said.

"Read your Bible; listen to God's Word. Listen to your youth pastor," Newell urges the youth to whom she speaks.

She emphasizes the importance of reaching out for the children of broken homes who are easy prey for cult groups. "Anybody who reaches out to the children of broken homes will be grabbed to meet those children's needs," she said, stressing that only through intensive Bible teaching will Christians be safe.

"The services at the People's Temple looked almost exactly like any other church service," Newell warned. "Only a person with a strong biblical background would have noticed Jim Jones didn't really preach God's Word.

"Pastors must preach the Word," she said, "because false teachers are here to snatch people away."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the California Southern Baptist. Wright is supervisor of research and records at California Baptist College.

Lack of training no obstacle
for Virginia hymn writer By Michael J. Clingenpeel

Baptist Press
12/21/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Richard Gwathmey has been a dairy farmer, county agent, commissioner of the revenue, real estate broker and active Baptist layman during his 71 years, but he had never written a hymn.

Until now.

Gwathmey now owns the copyright for "Out in the Mountain," a gospel hymn he wrote over the past two years.

Gwathmey cannot read music or play the piano. Not a note.

Two years ago Gwathmey, a member of 202-year-old Bruington Baptist Church in the Tidewater section of Virginia, visited a neighboring church for worship. That evening the guest preacher, whose name Gwathmey does not remember, delivered a message titled "The Good Shepherd," taking his text from Matthew 18:12-13: " ... If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

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"When I came home I began preparing the hymn right away," Gwathmey recounted. "It seemed in my mind there ought to be some words and music to go to this. Though I suppose it was assuming a great deal more than I should have undertaken with my lack of knowledge of music."

But the inspiration of the Scripture had given Gwathmey a song: "In my head I knew what I wanted to do, so I went to the piano," said Gwathmey, referring to an antique upright piano which, with its missing keys, sits like a snaggle-toothed giant in the back room of the 190-year-old farmhouse he shares with his wife, Betty.

He wrote the melody one note at a time, using one finger. "As I wrote the words I would put a note over top of them. I tried to get lines of music appropriate to the Scripture passage."

When he finished the initial draft of the hymn, Gwathmey took it to Sarah Sellers, then minister of music at Bruington church, for her advice. He remembered telling her he did not know whether to "scrap it or pursue it."

"Don't scrap it," Sellers urged, adding he should take it to Gwathmey's pastor, Roger Crump, who reads music.

In November 1991 Gwathmey took his hymn to Crump. Together they revised and refined the hymn.

Crump, who considers himself "a vocal musician, not a pianist," arranged the hymn in SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), though Gwathmey had requested the original score to be written for a male quartet. It also included accompaniment for piano and flute. Gwathmey suggested he and his pastor be considered co-composers.

Gwathmey likened his collaboration with his pastor to baking a three-layered cake with chocolate icing: "I chose the recipe (words), mixed the ingredients (stanzas and chorus) and baked it (wrote the melody for the stanzas). Roger applied the icing to the whole song by writing an outstanding musical score."

In March of this year "Out in the Mountain" was first performed publicly at a community hymn sing in a Methodist church near the place Gwathmey received inspiration to write it. Several music directors present on that occasion asked for copies and urged Gwathmey to have it published.

In August the hymn, dedicated to Gwathmey's three grandchildren, premiered before a large congregation at Bruington Baptist Church. It was sung by a male quartet, including Crump and three members of Beale Memorial Baptist Church in nearby Tappahannock, Va. To hear his creation performed "sort of makes things go up and down your spine," Gwathmey said.

Two months ago the composer and arranger received confirmation that their copyright had been approved. They are making plans to publish it.

Asked if he planned to write another hymn Gwathmey demurred, "I don't have any inspiration to do so at present. I like to try to write. But I never thought I would attempt a hymn at all."

"Out in the Mountain" is, according to Gwathmey, a "plaintive, pleading song addressed to lost souls." Its melody conveys the earnest appeal of its text:

"Out in the mountain wild and high
Out in the hills, hear the cry
Of a lost sheep that's gone astray
Far from the Shepherd's fold today.

Down in the dark street into the
holes
Filled with sin and sinsick souls.
Let Jesus send you to bring them out
Out of the darkness into the light.

Out of the mountain and the dark holes
Come sinners to Christ, baring their
souls;
Confessing Him Lord, the Heavenly King
The only One who can salvation bring!

Then rejoice with Christ, the King
For the miracles that He wrought;
For the lost one returned to stay
Even one is worth being sought;
Even one is worth being sought."

"There are several ways of witnessing, by precept and example, by telling others about the good news, through song or music. And I chose the last for this," Gwathmey reflected.

"May this song inspire many to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior."

Inquiries about "Out in the Mountain" may be made to Richard C. Gwathmey, Bruington, Va. 23023.

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Pastor says Spanish devotional
can help strengthen families

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
12/21/92

MIAMI (BP)--"En Quietud tendra fortaleza!"

Miami pastor Augusto Valverde realizes this Spanish phrase (translated, "In quietness is your strength") is more than a slogan printed on the front of a promotional button for a new product from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Taken from Isaiah 30:15, the words point to the importance of finding time for reverent worship and communion with God.

That's a practice Valverde and deacons at Iglesia Bautista Resurreccion in Miami hope to encourage in church members in 1993. Of particular concern to church leaders is that family members begin to worship God together at home.

"I'm convinced that a strong church is made up of strong families," Valverde said in a recent interview, speaking through a translator. "In a society where our values are crumbling away, we as a church need to be focusing on the importance of the family and growing together spiritually. This is at the very heart of the Christian faith.

"Society has lost the concept of family ideals. We need to be talking about what's happening to the family and what we can do to instill godly values in our people," he said.

One practical way Valverde hopes to help strengthen families in his congregation is through the distribution of Quietud, the new Spanish daily devotional guide published by the Sunday School Board. He ordered 325 copies beginning with the January/February/March quarter so every family in his church could have their own daily devotional guide for worship.

"We saw the need in our church to help our families grow stronger spiritually," Valverde explained. "Last year we provided materials to guide people in reading the Bible through in one year, but this year we wanted to give out something our members could use to stimulate family worship times at home. Quietud is perfect for this."

Written by Hispanic Southern Baptists, Quietud uses the same Scripture references, key verses and headings as Open Windows, the daily adult devotional guide published in English by the Sunday School Board. The devotional thoughts, however, are different, making the large-print guide an original publication, not a translation.

"This is a great blessing," Valverde said of the Hispanic authorship. "The writers know and understand our culture. They can focus on the special needs of Hispanics."

While devotional literature in many churches is simply made available to members, Valverde felt it was important that members of his congregation not only receive the materials, but understand how to use them as well. So, the devotional guides are being distributed and explained to church members by deacons through their normal family ministry visits.

"I believe that placing this material in the hands of our members and encouraging them to use it will allow for God to continue to revive, enrich and mature individuals and families alike," he said.

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Quietud, which also includes a one-year Bible reading plan and missionary daily prayer calendar, is being well received by Hispanic churches and individual believers, according to Roberto Gama, editor of Spanish language products at the Sunday School Board. Interest in the product has been expressed in Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua and other countries, he said, adding the board is exploring overseas marketing possibilities.

Quietud may be ordered from the Sunday School Board Customer Service Center by calling 1-800-458-2772. Customers in western states should call 1-800-677-7797. Spanish-speaking customer service representatives are available.

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A Spanish-language version of this story is available on SBCNet. (BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Cathy urges Southern grads
to succeed via commitment

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
12/21/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Chick-fil-A founder and chairman S. Truett Cathy told graduates at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's 170th commencement their level of personal commitment will determine the future course of their ministries.

"Oftentimes the difference between success and failure is one word, commitment," said Cathy during the Dec. 18 commencement at the Louisville, Ky., school. "It works in all areas -- in business, ministry and in our relationship to Christ."

A member of First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga., Cathy founded Chick-fil-A in 1967. The Atlanta-based chain now has more than 460 stores and is the nation's third-largest quick-service chicken restaurant chain. Cathy is known for numerous philanthropic activities, including his scholarship program for Chick-fil-A employees and his support of foster homes.

Cathy said he considers the food business to be his calling and he is called to succeed in that field. "It's really easier to succeed when you compare it to the price of failure," Cathy said. "It's Easier to Succeed than to Fail" is the title of Cathy's 1989 autobiography. He handed an autographed copy of the book to all of the 200 graduates immediately after they received their diplomas.

Ministers have the high calling of proclaiming God's Word to people, Cathy said. "Biblical principles do work. We are in a changing world, but important things are here to stay."

Cathy reminded graduates they have a responsibility to be role models. Some television preachers, he said, have "embarrassed Christians and embarrassed the name of God by claiming to be one thing and doing another."

The ability to change people by words is a gift from God, Cathy said. However, he maintained "probably the greatest gift God has given us is to influence people by what we do."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Please replace the first paragraph of (BP) story titled "Southeastern Seminary taps Bethel education professor," dated 12/18/92, with the following paragraph:

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary named Edward A. Buchanan of Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., to become the second of two education professors at Southeastern.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
