

# **patterson\_words\_63003**

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## **A PAIGE FROM HISTORY: Paige Patterson in his own words**

Paige Patterson, who soon will return to Texas as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, burst into national prominence in 1979 when he teamed with Paul Pressler to organize ultra-conservatives to control the Southern Baptist Convention. Below is a review of some of Patterson's more notable quotes as recorded in the pages of the Baptist Standard. The dates given are dates the quotes were published in the Standard.

### **May 9, 1979:**

Paige Patterson confirms to Baptist Standard Editor Presnall Wood that he and Paul Pressler attended meetings in at least 15 states aimed at gaining control of the Southern Baptist Convention presidency for the cause of "biblical inerrancy." Patterson characterized the meetings as not a radical departure from the procedure previously followed in electing SBC presidents—"unique but not different," he said.

### **May 30, 1979:**

Patterson said he is "thrilled beyond any possible way of expressing it that the six seminary presidents have reaffirmed their full faith in the

infallibility and inerrancy of the Scripture and that they assure us that this is true of their faculties also.” His statement was made in response to a news conference held by the six SBC seminary presidents to respond to Patterson and other critics of the seminaries.

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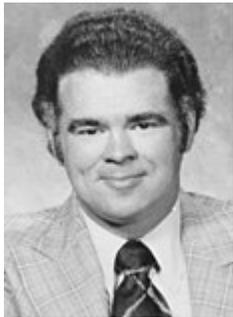
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## June 20, 1979:

Upon his election as SBC president, Adrian Rogers said he hoped the kind of political organization that led to his election would not be a pattern for the future. “I was not a part of this campaign. I never went to a single meeting. I don't belong to Paige Patterson or Judge Paul Pressler or even to this convention,” Rogers said. He added: “I love Paige Patterson and Judge Paul Pressler, but if I can't be the president of all Southern Baptists, then I don't want to be here.”

## April 23, 1980:

In an [interview with Baptist Standard Associate Editor Toby Druin](#), Patterson said he knew of no movement to change the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message. “I wouldn't change the 1963 statement myself,” he said. “I am perfectly happy with it because, as you know, it says the Bible contains truth without mixture of error. Whether you say inerrant or truth without mixture of error for its matter is inconsequential. In fact, our whole deal is not the necessity for changing the statement of faith. Our whole concern is not to continue to make a mockery of it. Let's admit what it means ... .”



A young  
Patterson at the  
helm of Criswell  
Center.

## April 23, 1980:

Patterson also explained in the Standard interview his definition of inerrancy meant there were no errors in the original copies of the Scriptures-which no longer exist. He acknowledged belief there are grammatical mistakes-“transcribal inadvertencies or whatever you want to call them”-in Bibles today but added, “We can now arrive at a 98 percent accurate text.” The remaining 2 percent, he said, are “scribal problems that can be worked out gradually.”

## **May 14, 1980:**

After Baptist Standard Editor Presnall Wood wrote an editorial demanding that Patterson give specific examples of alleged liberalism in SBC denominational posts, Patterson released a list of seven names—six seminary professors and one pastor. The seven denied the charges.

## **May 14, 1980:**

In a letter sent to the Standard, Patterson said: “No political party will emerge from among the various groups of concerned Baptists. No 'takeover' is planned, desired or possible. Baptists who believe in the full trustworthiness of the Bible are exchanging information and encouraging participation in associational and convention life. This is the full extent of what is transpiring.”

## **May 14, 1980:**

W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas and founder of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, where Patterson then was president, announces that he and other church and school leaders have asked Patterson to withdraw from leadership of the movement aimed at electing SBC presidents.

## **June 18, 1980:**

Speaking at Tower Grove Baptist Church in St. Louis on the Sunday prior to the SBC annual meeting, Patterson declares that accepting the Bible as inerrant is the only course that can lead to spiritual revival, which in turn is the only thing that can “stave off” World War III.



Jim Jones of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram interviews Patterson during the height of the SBC controversy.

## **Sept. 24, 1980:**

At the Virginia rally where Paul Pressler said conservatives are “going for the jugular” in their campaign to control the SBC, Patterson also spoke. He decried a proposal by the Baptist General Association of Virginia to tie a church's qualification to send messengers to the state convention to undesignated Cooperative Program gifts. Patterson advocated that conservative churches should send their gifts designated to avoid funding institutions or agencies they did not favor. “Clearly, this is taxation without representation,” Patterson said. He called such a tactic “extremely unbaptistic and contrary to everything that has been done heretofore in Southern Baptist life.”

## **June 17, 1981:**

In a debate with Kenneth Chafin before the Religion Newswriters Association, Patterson called the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message “very adequate” but said there are two phrases he would delete which he

characterized as “code words” for “neo-orthodox theology.” One called the Bible “the record of God's revelation of himself to man.” The other said, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.”

## **June 17, 1981:**

In the debate before the RNA, Chafin accused Patterson and others of executing a “ruthless reach for personal power” in seeking to control the presidential elections in the SBC. Patterson denied the charge, asking: “What power do I have? What office have I been elected to? What office have I sought?”

## **Nov. 24, 1982:**

Patterson and 39 others participated in a dialogue on problems within the SBC, held at a hotel in Irving. Patterson presented a paper in which he outlined six questions he said must be answered. One of those concerned his desire for “parity” or representation of inerrantists on seminary faculties and in denominational structures. Another concerned finding a way for conservatives to support the SBC Cooperative Program without violating their consciences. “Is there a plan by which all Southern Baptists may participate together in a cooperative way without the necessity of supporting that which is morally and theologically repugnant to them? ... There is either going to have to be a revision of the Cooperative Program-not an abolition, merely a restructuring-or it will suffer some enormous trauma.”

## **May 18, 1983:**

In an interview with Dan Martin, then news editor of Baptist Press, Patterson said his group did not intend to take over the seminaries and

agencies of the SBC but sought to achieve “parity” so that their views were given fair treatment in publications and classrooms.

## **Dec. 7, 1983:**

Interviewed by Dan Martin for a story on a debate about what constitutes a creed versus a confession of faith, Patterson cited a “historical distinction” between the two. “In terms of strict definition, there is no difference, but historically, a creed has represented an iron-clad definition of a doctrine to which all initiates had to subscribe in order to be a part of that particular order,” he said. “Generally, creeds are ecclesiastical laws while confessions are consensus statements.”

## **June 27, 1984:**

“I don't think anybody in their right mind can really conceive of two or three people or a small coalition actually gerrymandering and commanding and determining the course of 8,000-plus votes. You can't know that many people,” Patterson said after the 1984 SBC annual meeting in Kansas City.

## **Sept. 5, 1984:**

When Roy Honeycutt, then president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, declared “holy war” on those attempting to gain control of the SBC, Patterson responded hotly, calling Honeycutt's speech “a demonstration of denominational fascism which is determined to brook no criticism and will do whatever is necessary to squelch and suppress it.”

## **Sept. 5, 1984:**

Honeycutt also referred to an alleged “war room” in Dallas in which

Patterson had gathered “information banks” on up to 400 SBC figures. Patterson responded that “historical archives” did exist at Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, with information gathered over the previous 25 years. The collection of 5,000 to 6,000 items included news stories, books, tapes of sermons and tapes of seminary class lectures, he said.

## **Feb. 20, 1985:**

In a speech to pastors at First Baptist Church of Lilburn, Ga., Patterson criticized the “top-heavy bureaucracy” in the SBC, which he said was becoming more hierarchical.

## **April 17, 1985:**

In an interview with the Standard, Patterson defined what he believed the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message meant by describing the Bible as “truth without any mixture of error.” He said: “As the Scriptures came to men mediated through the Holy Spirit, they contained no mistakes or errors of any kind. Even the process of inscribing God's words was superintended by the Holy Spirit in such a way as to protect the human authors from any mistakes or errors—thus they wrote 'truth without any mixture of error.' By any acknowledged canons of human logic, 'inerrant' is simply a one-word summary of the phrase 'truth without any mixture of error.'”

## **April 17, 1985:**

In the Standard interview, Patterson was asked to identify pressing issues facing the SBC. One of four he cited was “the limiting of a growing, insensitive and sometimes self-serving bureaucracy in Southern Baptist life.” He also reiterated his position that requiring churches to give to the Cooperative Program without opportunity for excluding some causes was

“coercive and tragically unbaptistic.” Said he: “One cannot be called uncooperative and non-supportive if he finds support of some convention activities or institutions unconscionable.”

## **April 17, 1985:**

Later in the Standard interview, Patterson was asked if he believed there had been “overt, organized attempts in recent years to gain control of the institutions” of the SBC. His answer: “Emphatically not! There have been efforts to get evangelically minded Southern Baptists acquainted with one another to bring to an end the 'control' of a bureaucracy which C.R. Daley (editor in Kentucky) admits easily exercised its will, dominating convention life for 35 years.”



Patterson receives a certificate noting his service as a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board from then-President Keith Parks. Patterson resigned from the FMB after one term, when he became president at Southeastern in 1992. As he left the FMB trustees, Paul Pressler went on the board. Parks resigned the same year.

## **Jan. 7, 1987:**

Patterson criticized the SBC Foreign Mission Board as too restrictive in its requirements for missionary appointees. Specifically, he cited the FMB's requirement that candidates who had not attended one of the six SBC seminaries must spend a year at one of the SBC schools before becoming eligible for appointment. The comments were made upon announcement that Patterson served on the board of a new independent missions-sending agency called the Genesis Commission. "If they (the FMB) persist in the present policy, they had better get ready for a proliferation of organizations for appointing and sustaining missionaries, because if a man is called to foreign missions and the Foreign Mission Board says no, folks are going to find a way to go."

## **June 20, 1990:**

"That was where this all started. We think they should put a plaque there," Patterson told the Wall Street Journal, referencing Café du Monde in New Orleans, where Patterson and Paul Pressler were feted June 13, 1990, for their successful effort to gain control of the SBC.

## **Oct. 3, 1990:**

When trustees of Baylor University voted to revise the university charter to create a self-perpetuating board of regents in order to stave off an alleged “fundamentalist takeover” of the university by people tied to Patterson, the Standard asked Patterson for a response. He said: “I hope now that however much some might disagree with what we have done, they will at least see what we warned about is in fact now happening, that we would eventually lose our institutions if we didn't move to save them.”

## **June 26, 1991:**

When trustees of the Baptist Sunday School Board fired President Lloyd Elder in 1991, Patterson was considered a top contender for the job that ultimately went to Jimmy Draper. After Draper's nomination was announced, Patterson told Associated Baptist Press: “It's hard to believe that any agency in Southern Baptist life would call me because of the baggage I carry from the Southern Baptist controversy.”

*Compiled by Managing Editor Mark Wingfield with research by Beth Campbell*

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