

Former professor sues Baptist publication for defamation

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(RNS)—A former professor at a Georgia Baptist college is suing a Christian publication for defamation, saying he was falsely accused of sexual abuse.

Lawyers for Jeremy Lyon, who taught Old Testament and Hebrew at Truett McConnell University in Cleveland, Ga., alleged Associated Baptist Press, known as Baptist News Global, published “fabricated” allegations of abuse against him in a pair of stories about an abuse scandal at the school.

According to the lawsuit, attorneys for Lyon said BNG failed to contact the professor before naming him in the June 2025 stories and that the publication “fabricated information to support the false and defamatory accusations” against Lyon. The professor “categorically denies” the allegations against him, according to the suit.

In an email, Mark Wingfield, editor of BNG, said the independent publication stands behind its reporting.

“BNG operates with the highest ethical standards of professional journalism,” he said in a statement published on the BNG website. “We have been at the forefront of covering sexual abuse in the Southern Baptist Convention, and thus it is not surprising some would attempt to repudiate our witness. We stand ready to defend our work.”

The news stories in question reported a law firm representing an alleged abuse victim had included abuse accusations about Lyon in a letter to the school’s leaders. The letter, according to BNG, primarily contained abuse allegations against Bradley Reynolds, a former vice president at Truett McConnell, and accused the school’s administration of covering up

misconduct by Reynolds. Reynolds was indicted in December for allegedly lying to authorities in Georgia.

That letter also accused school leaders of mishandling a second case of alleged abuse, saying they pressured a different alleged victim in that case to drop her complaint against Lyon.

According to BNG, the letter was part of a trove of documents sent to leaders at Truett McConnell by the law firm Shein, Brandenburg & Schrope in North Decatur, Ga.

Truett McConnell's president, Emir Caner, was fired in September, after the school's board investigated how past allegations against Reynolds were handled.

Lawyers for Lyon alleged BNG's reporting about him was based on one source and raised questions about whether the letter in question actually came from a legal firm, according to the legal filing.

"There is no law firm 'representing a woman against Dr. Lyon,'" according to the complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia on Dec. 22. "No 'complaint' has been asserted by any law firm against Dr. Lyon."

Attorneys for Lyon declined to comment to RNS.

A copy of the letter cited in the BNG report was sent to RNS by an anonymous source. That letter contained no identifying information about who authored it. Shein, Brandenburg & Schrope did not respond to a request for comment about the letter.

Lyon no longer teaches at Truett McConnell. The accusations were based on alleged incidents in 2021 and 2022.

In the complaint, attorneys for Lyon say he was fired as an adjunct at

several schools as a result of the allegations and was removed from his role as president of the Creation Theology Society.

“Dr. Lyon’s damages continue to increase, as he is unable to find work in his professional field as a result of the statements in the articles and instead is currently working in retail at a significantly reduced income,” according to the complaint.

Lyon’s lawsuit is the fourth defamation claim filed in response to the abuse scandal in the SBC, the nation’s largest Protestant denomination. Former SBC President Johnny Hunt and former seminary professor David Sills sued the convention, as well as several Baptist leaders, after their names were listed in a 2022 Guidepost report that accused SBC leaders of mistreating abuse survivors.

Most of the claims in Hunt’s lawsuit were rejected by a federal court judge in 2025. The trial in the Sills case is on hold while the judge considers whether or not to dismiss the case.

And in 2023, a [Tennessee pastor sued](#) the SBC’s Executive Committee after a denominational committee informed his church about a past abuse allegation. The pastor eventually lost his job as a music teacher and had a job offer at a new church rescinded. That case is currently under review by the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Lyon would be the first Baptist figure during the SBC abuse scandal to sue a publication for publishing allegations of abuse.