

# SOUTHEASTERN NEWS

Office of Communications  
Southeastern Baptist  
Theological Seminary  
Wake Forest  
North Carolina 27587  
(919) 556-3101

Assistant to the President  
Rodney V. Byard  
Home Phone  
(919) 556-1485

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## BEWARE OF BAD SHEPHERDS, DURHAM WARNS GRADUATES

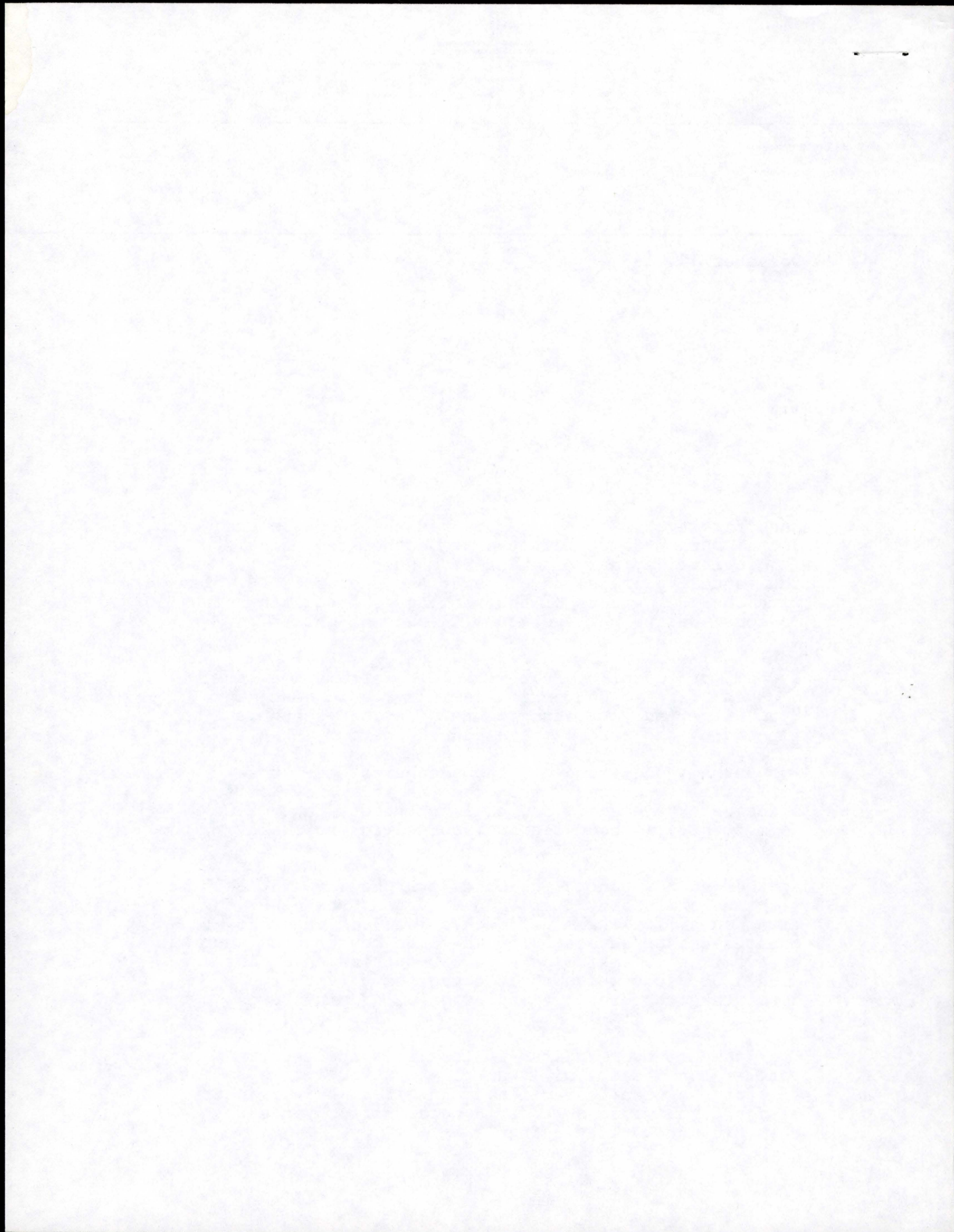
Wake Forest, N. C. - There are bad shepherds in the world, John I Durham told graduates at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, saying "You must not fall prey to the seductive pressures of power and success." He pled with the 102 members of the seminary's graduating class to "become what we believe you will become, Christian servants."

Durham, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at the Southern Baptist Convention seminary, said that often "you will find your struggle to be a good shepherd impeded by the example of a bad shepherd."

For Durham, one group of "bad shepherds" are those "television preachers" who "rake in the money, offer slick entertainment...and call for remote-controlled commitment...without leaving your living room easy chair."

Another such shepherd, he said, are the "Amway theologians" with the philosophy that "you are good, you deserve good, give God a little and get back a lot...." He also chastised the "advocates of the open mouth" who "just keep talking...taking care to say nothing, avoiding the danger of study which could cause you to interrupt by mistake the droning mindless flow of ministerial muzak."

The "take-it-over-and-run-it-fossils," the veteran teacher continued, "will want to turn you into a pillar of stone, a granite replica of an old-time religiosity designed to impose on today a pattern from yesterday that did not work even then."



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Then there are the "political rescuers" who want "to infiltrate the centers of leadership with clones of their own vast egos, unapologetic in their suspension of both ethics and integrity..." he continued.

Durham likened the modern "bad shepherds" to those of the prophet Ezekiel's day who abdicated their responsibility to care for the sheep, but, he said, "fed only themselves...took the wool for their own profit... and slaughtered the choicest of them."

He sees a comparison in certain of today's shepherds with those of Ezekiel's time: "They live in palatial homes. They drive great big cars. They have vacation houses. They sometimes get invited to the White House and share platforms with Senators and Congressmen. They are the Hollywood stars of the religion business."

The modern bad shepherds, Durham said, look for the easy answer and suspend morality. "They have mistaken power and influence for the problem-making prophet's mantle. They do not take the Bible seriously," demonstrating "an ignorance of Holy Scripture so vast and devastating in its infection as to be unbelievable as a chapter in a work of fiction."

Durham challenged the graduates to see Jesus as the model of the good shepherd, a continuation of God's message of promise in Ezekiel. He said that Jesus knows and serves the sheep, "even to the point of giving up his life for them." With Jesus, Durham said, "there is no mention...of power or prestige or position or wealth or fringe benefits."

"What we are given rather is a call to service involving both struggle and sacrifice," he proclaimed, adding that the final and continuing exam is Jesus' question: "Do you love me?"

The answer, "You know that I love you" is easy to say, Durham said, "but difficult to support" for Jesus commands his shepherds to "Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep."

Durham expressed faith that the graduates will be "good shepherds and good shepherdesses. Please go out now and prove me right, in Wake Forest, in Dallas next June, and in the uttermost parts of the earth."

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