

Baptist ethicist and commentator dies at age 63

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [April 12, 2017](#) issue

Baptist ethicist Robert Parham, the founder of the Baptist Center for Ethics and a critic of the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention, died March 5.

EthicsDaily.com, the center's website, reported that Parham died at a Nashville, Tennessee, hospital. He was 63.

"His purpose was the same as the organization he founded and deeply cherished: to help people of faith advance the common good," said Kevin Heifner, chair of BCE's board of directors. "This was not a sound bite for him but the way he lived out his understanding of the essence of the gospel."

Born in Nigeria, the son of Southern Baptist missionaries, Parham worked for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, focusing on hunger, the environment, and race. A moderate Baptist, he left the commission and started his center in 1991 as the denomination grew more conservative in the resurgence that began about a decade earlier. He was a critic of that conservatism and a commentator on topics ranging from the birther movement to just war.

As the Obama administration mulled over military intervention in Syria in 2013, Parham said, "War is always more costly with more negative unforeseen consequences than war-makers project."

Serving as an editor, Parham expanded his center's work to producing documentaries, including one about how churches address global poverty.

Despite being diagnosed with the rare disease amyloidosis, Parham continued to work on documentaries on topics including Baptist-Muslim relations, racism, and genocide in Nigeria, which he had witnessed as a seventh-grader. —Religion News Service