



Theological Study Group: A Good Idea for Southern Baptists

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Theological Study Group: A Good Idea for Southern Baptists

Tom Ascol

Dr. Ed Young, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, has recently appointed a task force consisting of 9 study groups, or committees, whose stated purpose is "to review where we as Southern Baptists have been, where we are, and where we are going. "These committees are to bring back reports which will help the SBC "plan, *pray*, and dream toward the future." Dr. Jimmy Draper is the overall chairman.

Of particular interest to the readers of the *Founders Journal* is the Theological Study Group which has Drs. Timothy George and Roy Honeycutt as co-chairmen. This committee's job description is filled with encouraging insights into the vital role of doctrine in the renewal of personal, church and denominational life.

They will perform their task, we are told, with a firm commitment to biblical inerrancy and a desire to see the SBC move beyond the recent denominational controversy into a "new consensus rooted in theological substance and doctrinal fidelity." Further, the committee has expressed a desire "to foster a renewed evangelical confessionism that is rooted in the historic orthodoxy of the early church, the Reformation, the Great Awakenings, and the distinctive principles of Southern Baptists."

To all of this we give a hearty, "Amen!" The other committee members are: William Bell, J. Walter Carpenter, Jr., Mark Coppenger, Stephen Corts, Carl F. H. Henry, Herschel Hobbs, Richard Land, Albert Mohier, Jr., and William Tolar.

This study group deserves our prayerful support as they undertake this most important work for the convention.

Following is the complete text of the theological study committee's job description as issued by the Executive Committee of the SBC:

In every generation, the people of God face the decision for faith or for unbelief. Always anew opportunities for obedience and growth open up, opposite which there are just as many occasions for disobedience, for stagnation, for retreat. Precisely such a challenge now confronts the people of God called Southern Baptists.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention, we face unprecedented opportunities for missionary outreach and the enormous challenge of bearing a faithful witness to a culture in decline, of being salt and light in a society which seems to have lost its moral compass. Nor dare we neglect our God-given duty to pass on to the rising generation the fundamentals of the Christian faith and a lively sense of our Baptist heritage. In order to meet these goals, we seek to move beyond the denominational conflict of recent years toward a new consensus rooted in theological substance and doctrinal fidelity. We pray that our efforts will lead to healing an reconciliation throughout the Southern Baptist Convention and, God willing, to a renewed commitment to our founding purpose of "eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the gospel."

The sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Bible. God's Word revealed in written form. The purpose of this Theological Study Group is to examine those Biblical truths which are most surely held among us and, on this basis, to reaffirm our common commitment to Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures, and the evangelical heritage of the Christian church. We shall seek to develop and to articulate theological directions and parameters for our common mission as Southern Baptists. The work of this study group may result in a statement of convictions as well as specific recommendations which shall be passed along to the task force convened by the President of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We undertake this task with gratitude for those whose labors have come before us. Over the past generation Southern Baptists have consistently declared their confidence in the total truthfulness of the Bible and the great principles of historic Christian orthodoxy. The Theological Study Group accepts as foundational to its work the Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1983 and the SBC Peace Committee Report of 1987, especially the theological findings of the latter. We also affirm the Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy (1978,1982) which serve as a guideline for writers of the New American Commentary now being published by Broadman Press. These documents are not infallible artifacts of revelation nor do they exhaust the infinite riches of divine truth. However, they are trust-worthy guides in setting forth a high view of Scripture and in providing a framework for the renewal of "the faith once delivered."

The work of the Theological Study Group will focus on those evangelical essentials and Baptist distinctives which form the core of our unity and mission as a people of God. We affirm without reservation the priesthood of all believers, the autonomy of the local congregation, and the historic Baptist commitment to religious liberty. We also recognize legitimate diversity among Southern Baptists on many matters of secondary importance. We desire neither to propose a creedal statement nor to draft a new confession of faith.

At the same time we shall not hesitate to reject the kind of doctrinal minimalism and theological revision which, if left unchecked, would compromise our commitment to the gospel itself. Baptist means faith as well as freedom: Christian liberty should not become license for the masking of unbelief.

We desire to foster a renewed evangelical confessionalism that is rooted in the historic orthodoxy of the early church, the Reformation, the Great Awakenings, and the distinctive principles of Southern Baptists. Only such a robust theological foundation, grounded in exegetically sound and hermeneutically faithful interpretations and proclamations of Holy Scripture, can meet the challenges of the new century and a rapidly changing global context.

While the emphasis of our work must be on the complete truthfulness and divine authority of Holy Scripture, other important areas must also be addressed. These include the Trinity, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the witness of the church, global missions and world evangelization. We must reaffirm our commitment to these great doctrinal principles because they are beset, in various ways, by subtle compromise, blatant concession, and malign neglect.

We pray for true revival and genuine reconciliation within our beloved denomination and trust that our efforts will contribute to these goals. We are convinced, however, that the awakening that must come can only begin where there is an atmosphere of hospitality to the truth. This in turn will be reflected in a renewal in a greater burden for the lost, a wider missionary vision, and the equipping

of God's people in the discipling of all the nations in fulfillment of the Great Commission. Thus, we sense an urgency in the task before us and commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its fulfillment, earnestly seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and the prayers of all God's people.



Why Can't They See This?

Tom J. Nettles

"Why do my Christian friends have such an aversion to the Doctrines of Grace?" "In addition to that, how can I keep open the channels of communication with them while making progress in helping them understand?" This article focuses on a few principles to bear in mind in the pursuit of these relationships.

Difficulties and Priorities

Many have learned first-hand that the doctrines of grace have a jolting effect when one who has been able to ignore them all his life first feels the impact of the encounter. If it were not true in our own experience, we have observed the perplexity, and sometimes outrage, of someone else's struggle.

Such reactions which highlight the revolutionary tendencies of these doctrines should let us know that these truths are not toys used only to relieve momentary boredom and to be put back into a box when one is tired of playing. Fragile! Handle with care: the opportunity is like cutting and setting a precious stone, not like throwing husks and scraps to pigs. But the delicate nature of the task doesn't diminish the strength necessary for steadiness and perseverance in the job, and it increases the need for sharpness in the tools. This spiritual odyssey calls for rigorous preparation and a readiness for some painful personal growth. Firmness and sharpness of personal conviction, compassion and kindness toward the other person, and patience toward a resistant attitude are necessary.

Furthermore, we should not approach this as if it were the top priority of spiritual life. In the hierarchy of importance nothing can replace the value of truth in one's own life: that God should be glorified through the increase of repentance, growth of faith and increasing conformity to Christ in my life must not be retarded or eclipsed by a misplaced zeal for any other thing. Jesse's instruction as to how we should value our own soul (Mk 8:35) and Paul's zeal for "this one thing" (Phil 8:13,14) set the standard here.

Working for the salvation of others is another priority. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. Paul was willing to become all things in order to win some. Most notably, our Lord's infinite condescension to seek and save the lost gives an urgency to the evangelistic task more compelling than the development of a consistent and systematic approach to Christian truth.

Not to be minimized in importance, however, is this particular adventure which is akin to the joy that the Apostle John expressed in knowing that his children walked in truth (3 John 3,4). Only rarely does something compare with the spiritual delight of seeing a friend, fellow Christian, or fellow minister embrace and enjoy this truth. Though less immediate in its importance, this task is not disjointed from the others, but supports, informs, and purifies them. What could be more revolutionary to a person's sense of worship, gratitude, and adoration of the greatness, kindness, and worthiness of God than an experiential knowledge of the true dimensions of the grace of God?

Principles to Encourage Patience

The reality and power of this, however, often dawns slowly and after a night of tumultuous resistance. The specific truths entailed deal with the most fundamental issues of the relationship between God and man. What is at stake, therefore, on the one hand is our thinking about God: His attributes, decrees and providential interaction with history.

On the other hand, they lay bare before our own eyes our sense of pride, self-sufficiency, fair play, and independence. Nothing in our society or natures prepares us for such things as utter dependence, reception of gifts (in this case of infinite worth) for which we have absolutely no merit, the necessity for continual acknowledgment of debt, and the admission that one's glory can consist only in a self-deprecating gratitude (see Phil. 3:1-11 and Gal. 6:1-3,14-15).

Principle of Growth

Sometimes resistance to this may come because one is still unregenerate. It would, however, be both unbiblical and uncharitable to conclude this about everyone who fails to approve immediately the doctrines of grace (though, to my mind, they are so clear and so God-glorifying that I am both pained and baffled when these truths are either ignored or treated with malice). Many times the absolute dimensions of our depravity, the harmony of justice, holiness and compassion with the unfettered rights of a sovereign God, and the purely gratuitous nature of salvation are so overwhelming that, though experienced immediately in the moment of regeneration and justification, they can only gradually take shape in our mental apprehension of how God has acted savingly toward us.

Firmness of teaching coupled with great longsuffering is a necessary combination in this ministry of doctrinal reformation. Paul recognizes this precise idea in his correspondence with the Ephesians. After having given a clear and moving affirmation of the glory of God in His sovereign bestowal of salvation (1:3-14), he prays that they might know the hope to which God had called them, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, and omnipotent display of effectual power in bringing about their saving belief (Ephesians 1:17-23). Paul knew they did not grasp all he had told them; but he told them anyway, prayed for them, and continued with instruction as to the centrality of these teachings to an understanding of salvation (Eph 2:1-10).

He also recognizes that the Philippians must grow in their grasp of the completely gratuitous nature of justifying righteousness and the relation of this to one's energetic efforts toward sanctification. In Phil. 3:15 he expresses confidence that God will give them advancement in that understanding; until then they must live in harmony with the truth that they do understand.

In giving instruction to the Corinthians, Paul indicated that such foundational teachings as the unity and exclusiveness of the triune God as creator and sustainer were not fully operative in the actions of some for whom Christ had died (1 Cor 8:4-7,11). Their lack of grasping this made them weak and less able to cope with the moral challenges and ambiguities of a pagan culture. Paul does not call a moratorium on teaching the doctrine of God and its implications for living in God's world. On the contrary, Paul uses them evangelistically in Acts 17 and in refutation of heresy in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. He even urges Timothy to point these truths out and in doing so he will be a good minister of Christ (v.6). Nevertheless, those who were fully aware of these truths were not to use them as a bludgeon on the weaker brother. Paul was willing to sacrifice even his apostolic freedoms in order to treat the Corinthians lovingly while more firmly establishing them in the truth.

Prayer, patience, and self-sacrifice, therefore, are necessarily fundamental in discussion of these truths. I have seen people, even in the intensified study of a seminary atmosphere, endure months and sometimes years of resistance before grasping with joy the truth that from first to last "Salvation is of the Lord."

Principle of Common Ground

An important step in maintaining an open relationship in which these biblical truths can be discussed is to establish common ground. Neither party of the discussion need have the impression that a conflict is being waged between

two entirely contrary views of Christianity. One should remind himself as well as his partner in the discussion of the many things on which there is agreement. The greatness of these should not be underestimated. All of them are the results of God's revelation of Himself and are distinctive of evangelical Christianity. Both believe that there is one God; He has revealed Himself in all of creation and in our conscience but particularly and most clearly in His Word, the Bible; this God is a Trinitarian being existing eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All human beings children of Adam and Eve; God has a right to judge, His judgment exhaustively just, and His final judgment establishes eternal abiding places for all moral creatures; our obligations to Him are commensurate with His worthiness; all His creatures, whether they have special revelation and grace or not, continue to be responsible for their worship of this triune God; our failure to meet those worthy obligations places us in a debt proportionate to the worthiness of the person to whom we are obliged; in the fall of Adam and Eve we all fell and constituted as sinful by nature and we immediately become sin by choice; salvation involves the re-establishing of a relationship righteousness and holiness before God; our present condition of condemnation is just and, therefore, God has no other obligation to the re-establishment of the relationship, then is a matter of me and grace, completely unmerited on our part and unobligated God's part; the core of this salvation is the delivering over of the Lord to death in which He voluntarily suffered the just wrath of the Father for our sin; it is only in this death that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to bring us to a saving knowledge of Christ in His saving work; this saving knowledge of Christ consists of repentance of sin and faith in Christ; who come to Him in this way will be received and not turned away; Christ will come again to judge all those living and all those who had died, will establish the new heaven and new earth and so shall ever be with the Lord continually worshipping the triune God in all His Glory (Revelation 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 21).

It would be very unlikely for one to have any serious disagreement with an evangelical friend on the truth of these statements. How much common ground is shared and what wonderful common affirmations you can make because of the clarity and beauty and graciousness of God's revelation to us! It would be good to make mud these in order to see that you are not contradictory in your thinking about a large number of foundational truths

Principles for Proceeding

A discussion whose goal is reformation, however, cannot indefinitely remain at the level of the patient tolerance of immaturity the affirmation of common ground. Progress must be made. I would suggest only a couple of principles for emphasis in the discussion.

Principle of Progressive Consistency

One, foundational truths always have other truths that are built on them and are consistent with them. The nature of this consistency sometimes surprises us. Habakkuk 1:12-2:1 pictures a prophet startled and bewildered over what he felt was contradiction to his understanding of God. Habakkuk knew quite well God's attributes of immutable holiness and justice. In fact, his perception of those attributes cause him great problems with what he observed in the history of God's people and what God revealed about His purposes. Can God use treacherous people and cruel events in His purposes and not be the author of sin and evil (v.13)? This *apparently* arbitrary sovereignty did not fit the inferences Habakkuk drew from the attributes. The attributes were true, however; and, though complex, God's active providence was not inconsistent with them. Habakkuk learned this, trembled at the power, wisdom, and justice of God, and received a deeper and more steadfast faith (3:16-19).

According to 1 John 2:20-28, every person born of the Spirit of God is very protective of the truth he knows about God. If something appears to him to be a lie, he will not accept it because he "knows the truth" and no lie comes from the truth. Such was the reason for Habakkuk's incredulosity. When the doctrines of grace are dismembered from the larger body of Christian truth and made to appear as Frankensteinian monstrosities, it should not surprise us

that they are rejected. They appear to be lies and at odds with indisputable Christian faith. Showing the integral relationship these members have to some of the more prominent parts of the body is the task of the "Reformationist." Those slow to hear may be as surprised as Habakkuk, but hopefully they will also be just as strengthened in faith.

In the final analysis all revelation is preparation for further revelation and consistent with previous revelation. The Bible is filled with this progressive revelation of truth on truth. All of us must realize, however, that the process of revealing truth on truth in an ever more beautiful, if complex, unified body ends a good bit short of exhausting all the knowledge of God (Ephesians 3:8, 19). Finally, we must be content that some truths that are revealed have implications that are yet mysterious and must remain so because God has not counted it wise to let us know.

Nevertheless, many things are cleared up for us by God's gracious revelation. The prophets gave revelation about the things of Christ that they did not quite understand (suffering and glory), but the full filling of the gospel in the incarnation and salvific work of Christ made them clear (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Jews believed the Old Testament and taught it truly, but many were unable to make the advance into seeing Christ as the fulfillment of all previous revelation. They took away the key to knowledge by refusing to advance in their understanding (Luke 11:52). Jesus said that a Scribe of the kingdom can receive the new revelation as giving the old its proper meaning (Matthew 13:52). Examples of the fulfillment of previous revelation by new, and explanation of old by new would be endless. Jesus does it with the new birth in John 3 (He indicates that Nicodemus as a teacher of the Law should have understood these things); Paul knew that that was his specific calling as he tells the Ephesians, "In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:4, 5). He fulfills his apostolic calling in describing the relationships between faith, works, law and righteousness in Romans and Galatians and God's calling of the Gentiles by grace in Ephesians and other places and in giving a host of other truths. Their explanations point out what was implied in the old all the time but only made clear and specific in the person and work of Christ. This is Peter's point in 2 Peter 1:19 when he says "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain and you will do well to pay attention to it as a light shining in a dark place".

This principle is true in the doctrines of grace. They do not contradict the truths I mentioned above, but give to them their purest and most consistent expression. What could be more consistent with salvation by pure unmerited favor than *unconditional* election? That means His choosing of us is not premised upon anything meritorious in us. What could be more consistent with the reality of human depravity than the doctrine of effectual calling? Surely if we are dead in trespasses and sins and not seeking God, then He must raise us from death to life before we will hate, and thus repent of, our sin and before we will love, and thus place faith in, Christ. What could be more consistent with the love of God for His Son and the impeccable justice of God than the doctrine of definite atonement? If Christ's death involved a true suffering of the just wrath of God for sins, will any portion of his suffering for sinners go unrewarded or unsatisfied (cf. Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12; and Romans 8:31-39)? We could go on, but the point is easily established. While we speak this way, however, we are aware that these doctrines are not simply logical inferences drawn from prior truths (though they certainly are consistent with them as mentioned above) but are themselves the result of biblical exegesis and involve receiving the full revelation of God in Scripture.

Principle of Grace

A second principle is this: no element of the Doctrines of Grace is a hindrance to the salvation of any individual. Grace makes the way; it does not block the way. Would grace be more gracious if it stopped short of the actual bestowal of infinite blessings: All of us are in a hopeless condition (Titus 3:3) and under condemnation (John 3:18-21). Neither grace nor any particular element of its manifestation is in any sense the ground of any person's condemnation (John 3:16, 17). Unconditional election, effectual calling, definite (or if someone prefers, limited) atonement, and preserving grace are all gracious, purely unmerited, and explanatory of how God does finally save

undeserving, resistant, justly condemned sinners. Christ's atonement will not hinder or place a barrier in the way of anyone who comes to Him: 'He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' God's calling of all sinners to repentance is not insincere but in dead earnest; His requirement of repentance and right to command it does not diminish one whit simply because we are so hardened that only omnipotent power will turn us (Eph. 1:19, 20). To complain about this is to turn God's grace into a debt He owes us. Because of this, no one can suppose that the Doctrines of Grace prohibit him from coming to Christ if he desires to do so or excuse him from seeking to know God through the person and work of the lord Jesus Christ.

The manner of the operations of grace is revealed in order that we might know to whom we are to be grateful for salvation and that we might learn to lament ever more deeply such sinfulness that would still condemn us were it not for grace. The objects of the operations of grace remain hidden, except evidentially from genuine demonstrations of repentance, faith, and perseverance so that all may realize that Christ's urging to "strive to enter in at the strait gate" applies equally to all (Luke 13:22-24).

Conclusion

The one who would teach for reformation must be patient, loving, and gentle. He must not only be mentally apt but also spiritually prepared in his heart both for the kinds of objections that come and the length of the journey. In addition to avoiding a compromise of the truth, he must work at holding it in the beauty of holiness. Also, he should continually relate distinguishing grace to the large foundation of evangelical agreement. Give no reason for any to doubt that you only want to honor the lord Jesus in His matchless and gracious condescension for sinners.



The Nature of Saving Faith (cont'd)

Ernest Reisinger

In our last study we began to consider the nature of saving faith. In this study we want to examine the difference between the Lordship and the non-Lordship teaching on this important subject.

The Reality of Spurious Faith

The Non-lordship teachers seem to ignore the fact that the Bible teaches that there is a spurious faith that does not save.

Now, it is certainly true that Christians do sometimes stumble, fall, make many crooked steps, and may even backslide grievously. Why is this? Because they still have remaining sin in them. There are as many degrees of sanctification as there are Christian.

Zane Hodge maintains that the Bible says nothing concerning two kinds of faith. He refuses to distinguish between what might be called a mere "mental faith" and a true saving faith. Yet, the Scriptures give clear illustrations of false faith which does not save.

A very vivid example of spurious faith is seen the case of Simon Magus. Of him it is written, "Then Simon himself *believed* also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip" (Acts 8:13). He expressed such faith that Philip took him to be a genuine Christian and admitted him to Christian privileges. Yet Peter later told Simon that he would perish with his money, warning him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God...I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23).

A man may believe *all* the truth contained in Scripture, so far as he is acquainted with it, and yet remain unconverted. Indeed, he may be familiar with far more truth than many genuine Christians. And as his knowledge may be more extensive, so his faith may be more comprehensive. He may go even as far as Paul did. Although Paul believed all the Scripture before his conversion, his faith was not saving faith. Note also Agrippa's case: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou *believest*" (Acts 26:27). But this faith did not save him.

James speaks of *dead* faith (1:17, 26)-mere mental assent to certain historical facts. He speaks of *devils'* faith (2:19)-mere religious appropriation of certain facts. The demons have a sound confession. They believe in the person ("Jesus, thou Son of God") and the power ("art thou come to torment us?") of Christ (Matt. 8:29). Surely neither dead faith nor devils' faith saves.

It is indeed a searching and solemn discovery to realize how much the Bible speaks of unsaved people who have "faith" in the lord. Though it seems incredible, there are those who are willing to have Christ as their Savior, yet who are not willing to submit to Him as their Lord. They are reluctant to be at His command and to be governed by His laws. More shocking still is the realization that there are unregenerate persons who profess Christ as lord, and yet are not in possession of saving faith. The scriptural proof of this assertion is found in Matt. 7:22,23: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Here is a large class ("many") who profess Christ as Lord, who do many mighty works in His name,

and thus can even show you their faith by their works, and yet, theirs is not saving faith. "Depart from Me," they will hear Jesus say.

It is impossible to know exactly how far non-saving faith may go, or how closely it may resemble true saving faith. Saving faith has Christ as its object; so has spurious faith, "Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men" (John 2:23, 24). Saving faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit; so also spurious faith has an apparent spirituality and may even partake to some degree of illuminating grace (Heb. 6:4). Saving faith is a receiving of the Word of God; so also is spurious faith. "He that receiveth the seed into stony places heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while" (Matt. 13:20, 21). Saving faith will cause a man to prepare for the coming of the lord; so will spurious faith. Both the foolish and the wise virgins had the lamp of profession-they all *trimmed their lamps* and said, "Lord, Lord"-but half heard the answer, "I know you not" (Matt. 25:1-13). Saving faith is accompanied with joy; so is spurious faith. "They on the rock receive the word with joy...who believe for a while but in the time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).

The Seriousness of Spurious Faith

When we realize how far spurious faith can go in its counterfeits, we are prone to say, "All this is very unsettling and confusing." Yes, it is distressing! But, if you value your soul or care for the souls of others, you will not dismiss this subject lightly. Since the Bible teaches that there is a faith in Christ which does not save and that it is easy to be deceived, you must earnestly seek the help of the Spirit. The Spirit Himself cautions us at this very point. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside" (Isa. 44:20). "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee" (Obad. 3). "Take heed that ye be not deceived" (Luke 28:8).

Failure to recognize the Bible's teaching on counterfeit faith has led to other errors. There is a tendency to regard spurious believers as being saved but not consecrated or not filled with the Spirit. The folly is often compounded by regarding those who give no biblical evidence of possessing saving faith as *carnal Christians*, since they do not act like Christians (I will address this error later). The solution to this unbiblical dilemma is sought in some kind of second experience or second work of grace. Thus, there is constant appeal to the *carnal Christian* (who in most cases is a spurious believer) to surrender fully to Christ's Lordship, and to be filled with the Spirit.

Spurious Faith Has Long Been Recognized

The great theologians of the past recognized that the Bible distinguishes between spurious faith and saving faith. Charles Hodge, that great Princetonian, speaks of *historical* (or *speculative*) faith, *temporary* faith, and *saving* faith (*Systematic Theology* 3:67-68). James P. Boyce, one of the greatest Southern Baptist theologians and the principal founder of our first seminary, speaks of *implicit* faith, *historic* faith, *temporary*, (or *Delusive*) faith, and *saving* faith (*Abstract of Systematic Theology*, pp.389-94). Robert Dabney, a great southern Presbyterian theologian, differentiates temporary faith, historical faith, miraculous faith, and saving faith. This is foreign language to the non-lordship teachers. With these great men of God, we hold tenaciously to that great hopeful and liberating truth of the Bible-justification by faith alone. I hope you would allow your head to roll down the street in the dust for that liberating truth. But we also recognize with those same men that faith which is alone is not the kind of faith which justifies.

The Acting of Saving Faith

True, justifying faith is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and condescension, variously expressed in Scripture according to its different actings toward God and its outgoings after Him.

True faith is sometimes spoken of as a desire for union with God in Christ-as a *willing*. "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 2:17). Scripture also speaks of *looking* to Him. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:2) this text was used of God in Spurgeon's conversion). This may be the weakest act of faith.

True faith is also expressed as "*hungering and thirsting* after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

True faith embraces Christ in whatever way the Scriptures hold Him out to poor sinners. To the *naked* soul, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath, Christ is *fine raiment* (Rom.

13:4).

To the soul that is *hungry* and *thirsty* for something that will everlastingly satisfy, Christ Jesus is "milk, wine, *water, the bread of life, and the true manna*" (Isa. 55:1, 2; John 6:48,51). True faith will "go, *buy, eat and drink abundantly*" (Isa. 55:1; John 6:53,57). To the soul that is *pursued for guilt* and is not able to withstand the charge, Christ Jesus is the *city of refuge*. The poor guilty man exercises true faith by fleeing to Christ for refuge, laying hold of the hope set before him (Heb. 6:18).

In a word, whatever way Christ may benefit poor sinners, He declares Himself able to do. True faith desires Christ in whatever way He holds Himself out in the Scriptures. If He is held out as a *Bridegroom*, true faith goes out to Him as a *Bride*. If He is held out as a *Father* (Isa. 9:6), true faith takes the place of a *child*. If He is held out as a *Shepherd*, true faith takes the place of a *sheep*. If He is set forth as *Lord*, true faith acknowledges Him to be the *Sovereign*. True faith desires Christ and aspires to be conformed to His image.

It is important to remember, in considering the actings of true saving faith, that every true believer does not manifest all these various actings and exercises of faith, for their condition does not require them to do so. Not everyone in the New Testament is told to sell his possessions (Mk. 10:21). Surely, not everyone dares say, "though he slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15). Many would not have pursued Christ like the woman of Canaan (Matt. 15:22-28), but in discouragement would have given up.

There is, however, one thing common to all who possess true saving faith; namely, a heart-satisfaction with God's plan of salvation by Christ. When one is pleased with God's method of satisfying His justice through Christ's person and work, and when the soul and heart embrace that plan, then one is believing unto salvation.

Saving faith is not a difficult, mysterious, hardly attainable thing. We must first acknowledge it to be God's gift, above the power of flesh and blood. God must draw men to Christ. "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him" (John 6:44). "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ... to believe on him" (Phil. 1:29).

Shall that which consists much in desire be judged a mysterious, difficult thing? If men have but a true appetite, they have a mark of true saving faith. They are pronounced "blessed" who "hunger after righteousness" (Matt. 5:5). If you will come, you are welcome (Rev. 22:17). Is it a matter so intricate and difficult earnestly to look to the exalted Savior (Isa. 45:22)? Is it mysterious or difficult to receive that which is sincerely offered and declared to be mine if I will but accept it? "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. 81:10). Such is justifying faith.

Lordship salvation sees true faith as coming by grace alone. Faith and faith alone is the means of salvation. But such saving faith has certain characteristics and certain things that accompany it. The character of saving faith is more than an inward conviction of the truth content of the gospel. It is a conviction which involves or will result in actions which reflect an inward change. "Therefore if a man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Saving Faith Recognizes Who Jesus Is

Non-Lordship and Lordship teachers differ in their estimation of who Jesus is. Now, this obviously is not some secondary matter or a theological hobby. Everyone must be right on this question or he will not go to heaven.

A successful leader is not someone who is always right. Everyone is wrong some of the time. Everyone makes mistakes. However, a successful leader is someone who is right more times than he is wrong. More importantly, he is right about the big things--the important matters. No Christian is perfect, neither in his life nor in his doctrine (though some seem to think they are 100% right 100% of the time!). A man does not have to be perfect in his doctrine, or in his practice to be a Christian, however, there are some things about which every single person, young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, must be right in order to be a Christian. And chief among these issues is the question of WHO JESUS IS.

Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator, said, in the *Introduction to the New Testament*, "All the grace contained in this book is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior; and unless we consent to Him as our Lord, we cannot expect any benefit by Him as our Savior."

Who is Jesus? He is the Lord of Glory--right now. Where is Jesus? He has been exalted to a throne, and He is on that throne right now (Acts 2:30).

The non-Lordship teachers do not teach these truths. They teach that His kingship is postponed and that only later will He sit on His throne. The non-Lordship teachers teach that you can have Christ as Savior and not Lord.

The Lordship teachers teach that there is only one mediator--Lord Jesus Christ, and as a mediator He holds three offices--Prophet, Priest, and King of His church. And when we have Him we have Him as He is offered in the gospel, that is, as Prophet, Priest and King. We have Him in all His offices or not at all.

The non-Lordship teachers ignore this and teach that we can be saved by one of His offices: Priest. They teach that His Prophetic and Kingly offices are optional. But the Bible says, "He that has the Son has life." It does not say, "He that has one of the offices has life." When we have Him we have Him in all of His offices.

There are 1000 Christs on the religious market today:

Jehovah Witnesses have a Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible.

Mormons have a Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible.

Christian Scientists have a Christ but not the Christ of the Bible.

Unitarians have a Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible.

Liberals have a Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible.

The Non-Lordship teachers have a Christ, but not the Christ who is Prophet, Priest and King of His church. They separate, or delete, the Prophet and King from the Priest-by implication if not by expressed statements.

The non-Lordship teachers have a Savior (Priest) who is a kind of a hell insurance policy and whose lordship is optional.

It is beyond doubt and dispute that the fundamental confession of Apostolic Christianity was, "Jesus is Lord."

1. *Lordship was the central confession of the whole Christian Community:*

"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:7). "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints¹ with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2).

2. *Lordship was the central confession of the New Testament:*

"Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9). "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

3. *Lordship was the personal confession of the New Testament:*

"And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God!'" (John 20:28). "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

4. *Lordship was a key part of presenting the gospel:*

"For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior J Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the: and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20). "That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord Savior..." (2 Peter 3:2).

One of the greatest soul winners that ever lived, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, warned young preachers in his school about this perversion that we see in much evangelism today. He said,

If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares he knows the Lord's will, but does not mean to attend to it are not to pamper his presumptions, but it is your duty to a him that he is not saved. Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply "accepting Christ" as their Savior, while they are wedded to idols, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie,

pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. It is interesting to notice that the Apostles preached the Lordship of Christ. The word "Savior" occurs only twice in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 5:31, 13:2). On the other hand it is amazing to notice the title "Lord" is mentioned 92 times; "lord Jesus" 13 times; and "The Lord Christ" 6 times in the same book. The Gospel is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The following New Testament statistics should settle the question. Jesus is referred to as "Lord" 822 times; "Lord Jesus," 22 and "Lord Jesus Christ," 81 times.

The word "*Savior*" is only used 24 times (8 of which refer to God the Father as our Savior).

If it were the only text in the Bible, Rom. 14:9 should settle question as to who Jesus is and why He died and rose: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be LORD both of the dead and living."

When He says, "Come unto me," He does it as the LORD. And when He says, "Depart from Me you accursed," He does it as the LORD.

You can see why the champions of non-lordship gospel say that Lordship preachers preach another gospel. It is true—they differ as to who Jesus is. The religious leaders of His day looked Him over very carefully but would not bow to His Kingship and they did not find salvation, nor will any one else.



The Faith of Ezra Courtney, Pioneer Missionary in the South

[Joe B. Nesom](#)

[This article is taken from a paper entitled, "The Faith Once Delivered: An Examination of the Theology of Ezra Courtney, with a Consideration of Progress, Declension, and Resurgence," first delivered to the Louisiana Baptist History Association. Dr. Nesom is the Vice-President of the Louisiana Historical Association, and Chairman of the Committee on Baptist History of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.]

Courtney's Life

Ezra Courtney (1775-1855), was born, according to the inscription on his gravestone, in the Darlington District of South Carolina. Other sources have the year as 1771 with Pennsylvania as his birthplace.^[1] According to the records of Bethel Black River Church in Burnt County, South Carolina, he was "working" for the church in the year 1790. Whatever the word "working" may refer to, it indicates involvement in the affairs of God's kingdom in a notable fashion while Courtney was only a teenager. As a young man, Courtney married Elizabeth Dearmond. Their first child, a daughter named Sarah, was born on August 25, 1792.^[2]

After living for a time in the Darlington District, where Courtney was listed as a licensed preacher at the Ebenezer Church, he and I family moved to Amite County, Mississippi.^[3] Just to the south lay West Florida which was then under the dominion of the Spanish king. Oppression by Roman Catholic authorities in the area had already been felt by newly arriving Baptists, and when Courtney preached to a group of them some nine miles from Baton Rouge, the Catholics threatened him with arrest. However, the Alcalde, a local official the Spanish government, protected him. As the American population increased, a new day of political change and church growth arrived.^[4]

Ezra Courtney was, from the first, active in the establishment numerous churches in both Mississippi and Louisiana, and helped organize the Mississippi Baptist Association in 1806. He served eight terms as its moderator. The Mississippi Association was comprised of churches located in southwestern Mississippi and southeastern Louisiana.^[5]

Ever a theologian of discernment, he never lost his balance and was quick to oppose the anti-missions sentiment that had a growing appeal for many in the early 1800's. At a time when English Baptists were still often tentative in their support for William Carey's work in India, Ezra Courtney gave himself enthusiastically to the missionary cause in the newly opened territories. And when the heterodox doctrines and practices of the Campbellites seduced some of the most prominent Baptist pastors, Courtney stubbornly stood his ground. In *House Upon a Rock*, the official history of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Glenn Lee Green called Courtney, "a vigorous and faithful Calvinist, unrelenting in his stance." Green also described him as a man who knew the difference between "authentic Christianity and all proposed substitutes."^[6]

Courtney's Faith

Was Ezra Courtney in the mainstream of Baptist doctrine and practice or was his teaching aberrant? What did Ezra Courtney believe to be scriptural doctrine?

Courtney's faith was a God-centered faith. His primary concern was the doctrine of salvation. He taught, (1) the total depravity of all human beings, that all of Adam's children are sinners and therefore unable of even desiring the favor of God unless God should grant them grace, (2) the unconditional choice of God in salvation, that God chose his elect in

eternity and that the choice of God does not depend on any human action, (8) that Christ's atonement was definite, that is for the elect alone, (4) effectual calling, that those who have been chosen by the Father and atoned for by the Son, will be called by the Holy Spirit to regeneration and, (5) the perseverance of the saints of God, that God is the author and finisher of our faith; therefore, we may be certain that those who were chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sealed by the Holy Spirit will continue in faith until death and will not fail of the grace of God for all eternity.

The Articles of Faith which Courtney helped draft for the Mississippi Association are a concise guide to the doctrines he preached. They are as follows:

1. We believe in one true and living God; and that there are a trinity of persons in the Godhead-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.
2. We believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, are of Divine authority, and the only rule of faith and practice.
3. We believe in the fall of Adam; in the imputation of his sin to all his posterity; in the total depravity of human nature; and in man's inability to restore himself to the favor of God.
4. We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people; in the eternal unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory.
5. We believe that sinners are only justified in the sight of God, by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is unto all and upon all them that believe.
6. We believe all those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world are, in time, effectually called regenerated, converted, and sanctified; and are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.
7. We believe there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, who by the satisfaction which he made to law and justice, "in becoming an offering for sin,," hath, by his most precious blood, redeemed the elect from under the curse of the law, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love.
8. We believe good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, are evidences of a gracious state, and that it is the duty of all believers to perform them from a principle of love.
9. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and a general judgment, and that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be eternal.[\[7\]](#)

The Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association are obviously a succinct presentation of the theology of the Magisterial Calvinistic Reformers with a Baptist ecclesiology attached. The dominant doctrinal interest is clearly soteriological.

An examination of other associational articles of faith and of the confessional statements of the numerous Baptist churches organized in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals a common commitment to these same principles. The wording may vary a bit but the doctrine of salvation is always the central feature, and the five soteriological concerns of the Synod of Dort are always represented.[\[8\]](#)

But why should there be such a monolithic stand for evangelical Calvinism among the Baptists of the South? why should they, in common with the Presbyterians and the pre-Oxford movement Episcopalians, espouse such doctrines? Not only do the confessional statements set forth the "doctrines of grace," but the same is true of the Baptist catechisms most often

used in the early 1800's.[\[9\]](#)

The Baptists living in the southern colonies were, like most of their brethren in the North, heirs of the English Particular Baptist tradition. In the 1640's an assembly composed of Puritan divines produced the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Particular Baptists of England had already issued their own confession in 1644 but, in 1677, wishing to show their similarity to the more numerous Presbyterians and Congregationalists, the Baptists drew up a new confession based upon the Westminster and Savoy Declaration. Its ecclesiology was Baptist, yet it retained word for word most of the Westminster Confession. Years later, James P. Boyce, the founder of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, would still be calling the Westminster Confession, "our confession".[\[10\]](#)

In 1689, the Baptist Confession *was* re-issued. For 200 years it would remain the confession of faith of the Baptists in England and Wales. In 1742 Baptists in the Philadelphia Association added an article on psalm singing and one on the practice of laying on of hands and republished it as the Philadelphia Confession. The printer was Benjamin Franklin.[\[11\]](#)

In the South the Charleston Association would publish the 1689 confession in its pristine form. Along with the Keach's Catechism and a church manual, the 1689 confession would become the only confession of great influence in the life of Baptists in the south. Dr. Richard Furman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston, S.C., gathered all the children, both white and black, before large congregations to examine their progress in Keach's Catechism.[\[12\]](#)

By 1845, the year the Southern Baptist Convention was born, the doctrines set forth in the 1689 confession would reign supreme. W. B. Johnson, John L. Dagg, P. H. Mell, R. B.C. Howell, Richard Fuller, Basil Manly, Sr., Basil Manly, Jr., Jesse Mercer, James P. Boyce, and John Broadus are all representative early SBC statesmen who unequivocally held to the Reformed doctrine of salvation. [\[13\]](#)

Men like Ezra Courtney brought to the frontier a commitment to the same doctrines. They stood shoulder to shoulder with their better known brethren and they enjoyed a practical ecumenicity unknown in our day, as men from different denominations addressed the meetings of associations and presbyteries. Although the followers of John Wesley were not in agreement, the influence of George Whitefield produced Calvinistic brothers even among the Methodists.

It should be noted that these "frontier" preachers were not uneducated men. The stereotypical circuit rider full of zeal and owning only a Bible and perhaps a hymnbook is off the mark. Numerous academies for the instruction of young pastors came and went. They were often taught by one man, as was the case with Courtney's teacher, John M. Roberts, of Statesburg, South Carolina. Roberts, a graduate of Brown University, operated a school in the classical tradition.[\[14\]](#) Courtney and the many other men who received their training in this fashion would have had a working knowledge of Latin and Greek and sometimes even of Hebrew. Their libraries included many of the standard commentaries of the day.

The circular letters written by Courtney reveal a refined literary style and testify to his resolute steadfastness in defending the orthodox faith. In 1832 Courtney wrote,

Dear brethren, we have often thought that the growth of errors was owing to the ignorance or want of information that prevailed... to our astonishment, the same errors that these dark ages produced are proclaimed and received by more than we could expect. When Alexander Campbell first came before the public as a writer, his religious views and feelings were thought to be identified with the Baptists. Some thought him a champion in Israel; but it was not long before some discovered a want of stability in him. Like clouds that are carried about of the winds, like a wandering star, he has gone from the highest views of Calvin to the lowest grade of Arminianism. Poor man, how desperately he has fallen! When Mr. Campbell announced that historically believing that Jesus Christ was the Son of God was the only requisite to baptism and that baptism was regeneration itself, the Baptists knew too well what these heresies had done and would do again if admitted. [\[15\]](#)

Demise of Historic Baptist Soteriology

Today, 160 years after Ezra Courtney wrote those words, Arminian doctrine, with the addition of a truncated version of the Reformed doctrine of perseverance, is the dominant soteriology of most Baptists. And, contemporary evangelism often degenerates into the practice of calling for the acceptance of several propositions followed by the repetition of a ritual prayer. The differences between modern Baptist practice and old-fashioned Campbellism may not be as great as some would like to think.

One hundred sixty years after Courtney spoke of a departure from "the highest views of Calvin to the lowest grade of Arminianism," semi-Pelagianism is found to be the dominant feature in the soteriology of both major factions involved in the recent controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The right wing with its fundamentalist orientation for the most part eschews the historic Baptist doctrine of salvation. The left wing with its liberal orientation is equally warm to the notion that man is capable of improvement by the exercise of his innate freedom. It is often said that God has done all that he could do and now man must do what only he can do. This position is popularly expressed in this way, "Satan cast a vote against you, God cast a vote for you, now you hold the deciding vote."^[16] Ezra Courtney, who was convinced of mankind's absolute inability would be astounded by the implied dualism in such a statement and by the exalted view of man's ability and God's impotence.

It is impossible to say when this doctrinal declension began but by 1843 a question was raised concerning the advisability of a change in one of the Mississippi Association's Articles of Faith. Courtney was made chairman of the committee which was assigned the task of investigation. The article in question was the fourth which asserted "the unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory. Courtney marshaled many passages of scripture in order to show that the article should be retained without alteration."^[17] The Association voted to reaffirm the doctrine. According to Boyd, the article was still held by the Association when he wrote his history of Mississippi Baptists in 1930.^[18]

Still, the necessity of mounting a defense for the old confession suggests that some were moving in a different direction. Why should this have been the case? First, the advent of hyper-Calvinism with its assault on the biblical doctrine of human responsibility and its anti-missions agitation probably caused many people to react in the extreme so as not to appear to give aid and comfort to heretics. Men like Courtney were able to maintain their evangelical character in both doctrine and practice. They would fight on two fronts at once: against Campbellism and its faulty doctrine of salvation and against the so-called "primitives" and their faulty doctrine of evangelism.

Second, the nineteenth century was preoccupied with ecclesiology not soteriology. The burning question for many was not, "How can I be saved?" it was, "what is the true church?" Campbellites inaugurated a "restorationist" movement and judged themselves to be the true church. The Oxford movement called Anglicans to look again to apostolic succession. It was in the nineteenth century that Rome officially promulgated the doctrine of papal infallibility. Various sects and cults gave their own answer to the question. Joseph Smith claimed a latter day revelation and established the "true church." him self.

Among Baptists J. R. Graves would teach a high church system that we have come to know as Landmarkism. The old Baptist doctrines would be partially retained, some would be ignored, and others would be rejected entirely, as in the case of the doctrine of the universal church. Because of Landmark influence, it would be 1963 before the Southern Baptist Convention would adopt a statement containing an affirmation of the real existence of the church universal.^[19]

A third reason for the eventual rejection of Reformation theology in popular practice was the gradual neglect of catechetical instruction. Failure to teach the doctrines of grace would considerably weaken them in the minds and hearts of Baptists. Still, as late as the 1918 publication of *The New Convention Normal Manual for Sunday School Workers*, the confession of faith that F.H. Kerfoot had written for the Eutaw Baptist Church in Baltimore and that had been adopted by many other churches was included. Kerfoot was Boyce's successor at Southern Baptist Seminary and later corresponding

secretary for the Home Mission Board. It is entitled, "What We Believe According to the Scriptures," and includes a section which identifies doctrines held in common with other denominations. It read as follows:

1. The absolute sovereignty and foreknowledge of God
2. His eternal and unchangeable purposes or decrees.

That salvation in its beginning, continuance and completion, is God's free gift.

3. That in Christ, we are elected or chosen, personally or individually, from eternity, saved and called out from the world, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.
4. That we are kept by his power from falling away, and will be presented faultless before the presence of his glory. Read Romans 8,9,10,11; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:4,5; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 1:2-5; Jude 24; Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5.[\[20\]](#)

And the same allegiance to Reformation theology persists in the "Baptist Faith and Message," a modified version of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith which has been the theological consensus statement of the Southern Baptist Convention since 1925. The priority of regeneration is acknowledged and repentance and faith are called "inseparable experiences of grace." The statement on election, free agency and perseverance could have been written by Courtney himself.[\[21\]](#) It is consistent with the historic Reformed, Puritan and Baptist traditions.

Nevertheless, it is clear that most Baptists at the end of the twentieth century are ignorant of their heritage and of the doctrines that their denomination regards, on paper at least, as the standard for our faith and practice. what factors contributed to the popular demise of the doctrines of grace in the twentieth century?

Thomas J. Nettles has identified two developments that have played a very important part. One, the tendency to overlook doctrinal distinctives for the sake of fiscal unity. Orthodoxy has come to be defined by many as support for the Cooperative Program.[\[22\]](#) Thus, often when a presbytery is called for the purpose of examining a candidate for the ministry, little attention is given to his understanding of doctrine and much attention is given to his commitment to denominational support.

In the second place, there is a great difference between the attention given to doctrine in the Baptist Press in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nettles says, "A second factor in the change involves increasing indifference toward doctrine in literature and Baptist papers. In fact, not only is doctrinal distinctiveness over-looked, it is actually discouraged by many contemporary Southern Baptists."[\[23\]](#)

Another factor is the popular dominance of Dispensational theology. Southern Baptists were not forced to form alliances with Dispensational and largely Arminian teachers in the fight against Liberalism, as were orthodox men in other denominations (the Presbyterian Church being one example, which resulted in a weakening of that denomination's adherence to the Westminster standards). Still, among Baptists, the influence of popular, non-Southern Baptist, evangelical literature along with growing acceptance of the Scofield Reference Bible brought doctrines into Southern Baptist life that were not consonant with the doctrines of grace. It might be argued that the late twentieth century controversy mirrors the earlier controversy in other denominations minus the influence of leaders who are themselves committed to the historic Baptist doctrine of salvation.

Resurgence

A generation ago it was possible, but difficult, to find seminary professors and denominational leaders who believed and taught the historic Southern Baptist doctrine of grace. Today there are professors, seminary deans, editors, denominational employees, missionaries, agency trustees, a growing number of younger, often well educated pastors, and a host of enthusiastic church members who would agree with the theology of Ezra Courtney.

What has caused this revitalization of evangelical Calvinism among Southern Baptists? Let me suggest four reasons.

First, the assertion of many in the polarized climate of the recent controversy that they alone represent the true ideological tradition of our Baptist ancestors has encouraged many people to examine the claims made by both sides in the light of our history. What is often discovered is this: the historic Southern Baptist doctrine of biblical authority is in close agreement with that which is being contended for by today's conservatives. Yet, the historic Southern Baptist doctrine of salvation has been largely forsaken by contemporary conservatives and moderates alike. Also, that Baptists have loved religious liberty through the ages is found to be quite true, but it becomes equally clear that the central concern was not "soul-competency" (however understood) but the proclamation of a well-rounded theology with the grace of God in the salvation of sinners as its dominant theme.

Second, there has been a renewed interest in Baptist history in the last generation. Many are willing not only to concern themselves with generic biographical data concerning such figures as Carey, Fuller, and Spurgeon, as well as the early Southern Baptists, but also willing to examine what those men believed and taught.

Third, the renewal of Reformed theology in evangelicalism, across denominational lines, in large measure by the publication of new works as well as the re-printing of hundreds of older books, has played a significant role. The re-printing and wide distribution of Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology* and the re-printing of John Leadly Dagg's *Manual of Theology* have made a great impact in introducing contemporary Southern Baptists to their doctrinal heritage.

Fourth, this resurgence has been fostered and conserved by a generation of younger pastors and professors. A national conference, "The Southern Baptist Conference on the Faith of the Founders" (commonly referred to as the "Founders Conference," which is only in its eleventh year) has already given birth to another regional conference, a youth conference and a theological journal. Like Mark Twain, who, when informed that his death had been reported in the press, responded that his demise was highly exaggerated, it now appears that the faith of Ezra Courtney will not only endure but prosper.



¹ For example, Jesse Laney Boyd, *A Popular History of the Baptists Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: 1930), pp.77-79.

² "Elder Ezra Courtney (1775-1855): Bringing the Baptist Faith to the Wilderness," *Journal of Louisiana Baptist History*, Vol. I, 1988, p. 52-54.

³ *Ibid.*, p.55.

- ⁴W. E. Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana from Earliest Times to the Present* (St. Louis: 1888), pp.37-38.
- ⁵T. M. Bond, *A Republication of the Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association from its Organization in 1806 to the Present (1849)* (New Orleans. 1849), p.12.
- ⁶ Glenn Lee Green, *House Upon A Rock* (Alexandria, LA 1973), p.72.
- ⁷ *Bond*, pp.7-8.
- ⁸Author's private collection (I have not discovered any associational articles or local church confessions in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana that vary from this pattern).
- ⁹Thomas J. Nettles, *Baptist Catechisms*, (Memphis, 1983).
- ¹⁰ James Pettigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (1887), p.339.
- ¹¹William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: 1969), p. 350.
- ¹² Jesse L. Boyd, *A Popular History of Baptists in America Prior to 1845*. (New York:1947), p.100. Keach's catechism is essentially the Westminster Shorter Catechism revised for Baptists.
- ¹³ For example, see John L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology*, (Southern Baptist Publication Society:1857).
- ¹⁴Joe M. King, *A History of South Carolina Baptists*, (Columbia: 1964), p.45.
- ¹⁵ *Bond*, p.138.
- ¹⁶ It is difficult to imagine that any Baptist preacher in the early nineteenth century would have made such a statement.
- ¹⁷ *Bond*, pp.8-9.
- ¹⁸ *Boyd*, p.78.
- ¹⁹ See "The Baptist Faith and Message," 1963, p.13.
- ²⁰*The New Convention Normal Manual for Sunday School Workers*, (Nashville):1918), pp.
- ²¹ "*The Baptist Faith and Message*", 1963, p. 12.
- ²² Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory*, (Grand Rapids:1986), p.244.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp.244-245.



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¹ For example, Jesse Laney Boyd, *A Popular History of the Baptists Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: 1930), pp.77-79.

² "Elder Ezra Courtney (1775-1855): Bringing the Baptist Faith to the Wilderness," *Journal of Louisiana Baptist History*, Vol. I, 1988, p. 52-54.

³ *Ibid.*, p.55.

⁴W. E. Paxton, *A History of the Baptists of Louisiana from Earliest Times to the Present* (St. Louis: 1888), pp.37-38.

⁵T. M. Bond, *A Republication of the Minutes of the Mississippi Baptist Association from its Organization in 1806 to the Present (1849)* (New Orleans. 1849), p.12.

⁶ Glenn Lee Green, *House Upon A Rock* (Alexandria, LA 1973), p.72.

⁷ *Bond*, pp.7-8.

⁸Author's private collection (I have not discovered any associational articles or local church confessions in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana that vary from this pattern).

⁹Thomas J. Nettles, *Baptist Catechisms*, (Memphis, 1983).

¹⁰ James Pettigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (1887), p.339.

¹¹William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: 1969), p. 350.

¹² Jesse L. Boyd, *A Popular History of Baptists in America Prior to 1845*. (New York:1947), p.100. Keach's catechism is essentially the Westminster Shorter Catechism revised for Baptists.

¹³ For example, see John L. Dagg, *A Manual of Theology*, (Southern Baptist Publication Society:1857).

¹⁴Joe M. King, *A History of South Carolina Baptists*, (Columbia: 1964), p.45.

¹⁵ Bond, p.138.

¹⁶ It is difficult to imagine that any Baptist preacher in the early nineteenth century would have made such a statement.

¹⁷ Bond, pp.8-9.

¹⁸ Boyd, p.78.

¹⁹ See "The Baptist Faith and Message," 1963, p.13.

²⁰*The New Convention Normal Manual for Sunday School Workers*, (Nashville):1918), pp.

²¹ *"The Baptist Faith and Message"*, 1963, p. 12.

²² Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory*, (Grand Rapids:1986), p.244.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.244-245.



How Can We Help Our Pastor?

John A. Broadus

When ever your pastor may stand before the gathered assembly he can speak with more power because of you, if you do your duty to him and through him.

May I mention some of the ways in which we may help our pastor? I speak as one who at home sits for the most part, a private member of the church in the pew, toiling all the week, and often unable to preach on Sunday, and yet as one whose heart is all in sympathy with the pastor's heart, and perhaps a little better able than common to sympathize with both sides.

We can help him to draw a congregation. You know we always say now a days, that it is very important to get a man who can draw a congregation. So it is, though it is very important to consider what he draws them there for, and what he does with them after he gets them there; and sometimes it does seem to me that it would be better for some people to remain not drawn than to be drawn merely to hear and to witness that which does them harm rather than good. But we do want a man who can draw a congregation; and we can help our pastor to draw a congregation. How? Well, by taking care that we are always drawn ourselves, by occupying our own place, sometimes when we do not feel like it, on Sunday evening; because it is our duty to our pastor, our duty to the congregation, and our duty to the world.

And we can do something to bring others. I recall a story, that a few years after the war (which is the great chronological epoch in a large part of our country), at the white Sulphur Springs, in Virginia, was a venerable man at whom all the people looked with profound admiration, whose name was Robert E. Lee. He was a devout Episcopalian. One day a Presbyterian minister came to preach in the ballroom, according to custom, and he told me this story. He noticed that General Lee, who was a very particular man about all the proprieties of life, came in late, and he thought it was rather strange. He learned afterwards that the General had waited until all the people who were likely to attend the service had entered the room, and then he walked very quietly around in the corridors and parlors, and out under the trees, and wherever he saw a man or two standing he would go up and say gently: "We are going to have divine service this morning in the ball-room; won't you come?" And they all went. To me it was very touching that that grand old man, whose name was known all over the world and before whom all the people wanted to bow, should so quietly go around, and for a minister of another denomination also, and persuade them to go. Should not we take means to help our pastor to draw a congregation?

And when he begins to preach, cannot we help him to preach? Demosthenes is reported to have said (and he ought to have known something about it), that eloquence lies as much in the ear as in the tongue. Everybody who can speak effectively knows that the power of speaking depends very largely upon the way it is heard, upon the sympathy which one succeeds in gaining from those he addressed. If I were asked what is the first thing in effective preaching, I should say, sympathy; and what is the second thing, I should say, sympathy; and what is the third thing, sympathy. We should give our pastor *sympathy* when he preaches.

Sometimes one good listener who does not care much about the gospel can put the sermon all out of harmony. The soul of a man who can speak effectively is a very sensitive soul, easily repelled and chilled by what is unfavorable, and easily helped by the manifestation of simple and unpretentious sympathy.

How can we help our pastor? We can help him by talking about what he says; not talking about the performance and about the per-former, and all that, which, if it is appropriate anywhere, is surely all inappropriate when we turn away

from the solemn worship of God, and from listening to sermons intended to do us good--but talking about the thoughts that he has given us, recalling them sometimes to one who has heard them like ourselves, repeating them sometimes to some one who has not had the opportunity of hearing them. Thus may we multiply whatever good thoughts the preacher is able to present, and keep them alive in our own minds and the minds of fellow-Christians.

Will you pardon an illustration here, even if it be a personal one? Last year in a city in Texas, I was told of the desire on the part of a lady for conversation, and when we met by arrangement she came in widow's [clothes], with a little boy of ten or twelve years old, and began to tell this story: Her husband was once a student at the University of Virginia, when the person she was talking to was the chaplain there, more than twenty-five years ago. He was of a Presbyterian family from Alabama, and said he never got acquainted with the chaplain, for the students were numerous, but that he heard the preaching a great deal, and in consequence of it, by God's blessing upon it, he was led to take hold as a Christian, and went home and joined the church of his parents.

After the war he married this lady, and a few years ago he passed away. She said he was in the habit, before she knew him, she learned, of talking often in the family about things he used to hear the preacher say; the preacher's words had gotten to be household words in the family. And then when they were married he taught some of them to her, and was often repeating things he used to hear the preacher say. Since he died she had been teaching them to the little boy--the preacher's words.

The heart of the preacher might well melt in his bosom at the story. To think that your poor words, which you yourself had wholly forgotten, which you could never have imagined had vitality enough for that, had been repeated among strangers, had been repeated by the young man to his mother, repeated by the young widow to the child--your poor words, thus mighty because they were God's truth you were trying to speak and because you had humbly sought God's blessing! And through all the years it went on, and the man knew not, for more than a quarter of a century, of all that story.

Ah, we never know when we are doing good. Sometimes we may think we are going to do great things, and so far as can ever be ascertained, we do nothing; and sometimes when we think we have done nothing, yet, by the blessing of God, some truth has been lodged in a mind here and there, to bear fruit after many days.

How can we help our pastor? We can furnish him illustrations. Mr. Spurgeon tells us that he requests his teachers, and his wife, and various other friends to hunt up illustrations for him. He asks them whenever they have come across anything in reading or in conversation that strikes them as good, to write it down and let him have it, and whenever he sees a fit opportunity he makes a point of it. We can all furnish our pastors with illustrations. In that very way, perhaps, we might give a preacher many things that would be useful to him.

In other ways we can all do so. Ah, when the preacher tells how it ought to be, if you can sometimes humbly testify, in the next meeting on Tuesday or Friday evening, how it has been in your experience, you are illustrating for the preacher. When the preacher tells what Christianity can do for people, if your life illustrates it for all around, there is a power that no speech can ever have.



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News

Mission 150 Gains Support

Mission 150 is a recently announced effort to prepare and mail a special issue of the *Founders Journal* to every Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention. This project is being planned to coincide with the sesquicentennial anniversary of the SBC in 1995. Articles will address the theological history and heritage of our denomination. To date, over \$8000 has been contributed to this effort. The projected cost for Mission 150 is \$50,000. It is hoped that more churches and individuals will agree that this effort is worthy of prayerful and financial support. Inquiries are encouraged and should be directed to the editor at the *Founders Journal* address.

Fred Malone begins new pastorate

Fred Malone became the pastor of First Baptist Church in Clinton, Louisiana on January 1. He previously served the Heritage Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas, a congregation he helped establish more than 10 years ago. His new address is: P.O. Box 552, Clinton, LA 70722.



Book Review

Baptist Theologians edited by Timothy George and David S. Dockery; 1990, 704 pp., Broadman Press.

Reviewed by [Roger Ellsworth](#)

Here is a book that was born in a cemetery. As they took a summer afternoon's walk through Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky. Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School, and David Dockery, newly appointed Dean of Theology at Southern Seminary, saw the tombstones of several Baptist leaders. They realized that many of the giants of the faith are virtually unknown to Baptists today. They further realized that there is "a crisis in Baptist life today which cannot be resolved by bigger budgets, better programs¹ or more sophisticated systems of data processing and mass communication," but only by a renewed focus on theology.

This book, then, seeks to restore doctrinal vigor by resurrecting the memory of such giants. But it also features contemporary Baptists who have had and continue to have a profound impact on Baptist thinking.

Here we find the good old names of Bunyan and Keach, Gill and Dagg, Mell and Boyce, Spurgeon and Carroll, and the modern names of Criswell, Hobbs, Henry, Erickson, and Ladd.

Each of the thirty-three theologians in this book is treated by a different scholar by means of a brief biography, an analysis of his theology, an evaluation of his thought and life, and a bibliography of his major works. Endnotes are also found at the conclusion of each chapter.

George introduces the book with an essay entitled "The Renewal of Baptist Theology," and Dockery concludes it with a survey entitled "Baptist Theology and Theologians." George's essay alone is worth, in my estimation, the price of the book. Here is a sample: "Seduced by the lure of modernity ('whatever is latest is best'), we find ourselves awash on the sea of pragmatism ('whatever works is right'), indifference, and theological vacuity. The results are all about us: Church rolls stuffed with so-called 'inactive members' no one has seen or heard from in years, trendy sermons which lack both biblical depth and spiritual power, a generation of young people uninstructed in the rudiments of the faith, fractious controversies which sap our strength and strain our fellowship, shallow worship services geared more to the applause of men than the praise of God, a slackening interest in evangelism and missions, all amidst a hurried activism steeped in this-worldly priorities."

Those who are interested in Baptist theology and history will find a veritable feast here, and those who think such things are boring might just find they have been sadly mistaken.



Charles Spurgeon on Saving Faith

A saving trust leads us to accept Christ in all his offices. He is to us not only Priest to put away our sin, but Prophet to remove our ignorance, and King to subdue our rebellions. If as Priest he purges the conscience, as Prophet he must direct the intellect, and as King he must rule the life. We must yield our will to Christ's will, that henceforth every thought may be brought into captivity to his

holy sway. There is no whole-hearted trust in Christ unless Christ is taken as a whole. You cannot have half a Christ and be saved, for half Christ is not Christ. You must take him as he is revealed in Scripture, Jesus Christ the son of God, the Saviour of men, very God of very God, the faithful and true Witness, your Guide, your Lord, your Husband, your everything. Do you trust him so? If not, you have not trusted him at all. This is the trust which brings salvation with it----an entire reliance upon an entire Saviour so far as you know him.

