



The Reformation We Need

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The Founders Journal

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Taken from the original cover of Tom Nettles' book on Baptist Catechisms.

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confession of faith that Southern Baptists produced, [*The Abstract of Principles*](#).

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The Reformation We Need

[Tom Ascol](#)

*Change and decay in all around I see
O, Thou Who changest not, abide with me.*

These words taken from the 18th century Scottish minister Henry Lyte's dying hymn are a fitting observation and prayer for the present hour. No matter where one looks today the signs of degeneration seem prevalent. What right thinking person is encouraged with the directions which the major institutions of government, state-run education, or the family are taking? Despite isolated exceptions in each, all of these institutions are in moral disarray.

What about the church? Are we any better off? It is far easier to identify the shortcomings of our neighbor's province than it is to examine honestly our own domain. Once allowances have been made for isolated exceptions, however, it is not too much to claim that the church of Jesus Christ seems to be making very little difference in the contemporary American scene.

Perhaps the greatest indictment is found in the fact that public morality has declined at the same time that participation in church has increased. Research indicates that 9 out of 10 American adults consider themselves "Christian" while a full 40% claim to be "born again." What kind of Christianity is it that leaves a man's character unchanged? It is certainly not the Bible's kind.

Newly elected Southern Seminary President Al Mohler has astutely observed, "Many churches have made their own compromises with modernity and have built large congregations, not on the foundation of the gospel, but on its expense."[\[1\]](#) The biblical gospel is a life-changing message. When that which churches are preaching leaves its adherents unchanged it is time to admit that the true gospel has been lost.

What is needed, then, is a rediscovery, reclamation, and reassertion of that old, unchanged gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ. In other words, what is needed is reformation—a genuine re-forming of the church and her message according to biblical revelation.

More than political reform, more than educational reform, more than social reform, what this generation desperately needs is the church of Jesus Christ to become biblically re-formed in faith and practice. This is notably true in our own Southern Baptist corner of Zion.

The Reformation principle *ecclesia semper reformanda* presents a healthy concept which we would do well to recapture in our day. What the Reformers understood is this: since the church will never be perfect in this age, it is therefore in need of continual reformation by God's Word.

As a denomination our beloved SBC is in dire need of such reformation. It will not do simply to promote new and improved programs or better organization. Neither will it suffice to recommend the latest methodologies in ministry. What we do is directed by what we believe. At the center of any ecclesial renewal, then, there must be a reformation of theology.

Ken Hemphill, Director of the Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth, recognizes this when he acknowledges, "Our theology is best suited for church growth, but we desperately need a theological renewal."[\[2\]](#) Mr. Hemphill is not overstating the case. The need is desperate.

Three years ago Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George rightly observed, the central challenge facing Baptist life

today is at heart theological." [3] Until we see a renewal in theology we will not see an appreciable change for the better in our churches.

Like revival, genuine reformation is a work of the sovereign Spirit. We cannot command its appearance. But that does not mean that we are free from obligation to seek it and labor for it. Concerning "theological revival," Timothy George has written, "We cannot work it up: only God can send it down. But we can pray for it and prepare ourselves for it through the study and reclamation of the theological legacy we have received and are charged as a sacred duty to pass on." [4]

Reclaiming our theological legacy in the pursuit of genuine reformation is the rationale behind the enormous Mission 150 project (see page 32). Why expend thousands of man-hours at a cost of \$50,000 to produce and send out, free of charge, 40,000 special issues of the *Founders Journal* to Southern Baptist pastors? Because the need for renewal is "desperate." Pray that our Lord will bless this effort to the furtherance of reformation in our denomination.



¹ "Has Theology a Future in the Southern Baptist Convention? Toward a Renewed Theological Framework" in *Beyond the Impasse? Scripture, Interpretation, and Theology in Baptist Life* (Nashville: Broadman 1992), 103.

² *Facts & Trends*, [March 1993, p.10]

³ *The Renewal of Baptist Theology* (Cape Coral, FL: SBFC, n.d.), 2. This booklet is, in slightly edited form, the opening chapter in *Baptist Theologians*, edited by Timothy George and David Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990).

⁴ *Baptist Theologians*, 24.



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⁴ *Baptist Theologians*, 24.



Basil Manly and the Bible Doctrine of Inspiration

Timothy George

[This essay will appear as the introduction to the reprint of Manly's *Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, the first volume in the projected series, the *Library of Baptist Classics*, forthcoming from Broadman Press.]

Basil Manly's Bible Doctrine of Inspiration was written for one reason: to present a clear, comprehensive account of the historic Christian belief in the Bible as the divinely inspired Word of God. When the book was first published in 1888, it was acclaimed as "the best monograph on inspiration that has been produced by an American scholar."^[1] *From England the famous British preacher, Alexander Maclaren, wrote to the author praising his lucid, well-considered treatment of such a vital topic and commending his "unflinching contention for the authority of the Bible, which so many of our would-be theological instructors now-a-days ignore."*^[2]

Significantly, Manly did not call his book the "Baptist Doctrine of Inspiration." It was the "Bible Doctrine" he sought to expound. Manly was loyal to his denomination, but on this issue he realized that Baptists stood shoulder to shoulder with all evangelical, Bible-believing Christians as champions of the Reformation principle of sola Scriptura, "Scripture alone." For this reason his book appealed not only to Baptist believers in America but to earnest seekers throughout the Christian world.

All the same, Manly's book did have a direct influence within his own denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention. Indeed, as we shall see, it was precipitated by a crisis within the very seminary Manly had helped to establish some thirty years before. In a sense, Manly spoke not only for himself in this book but also for the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and, even more broadly, for the vast majority of Baptist folk, pastors and lay persons alike, who would have heartily agreed with Roger Williams when he declared that "every word, syllable and tittle in that Scripture or writing is the word, or immediate revealed will of God."^[3]

The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration is a classic exposition of this fundamental Baptist commitment to the authority of Holy Scripture. More than 100 years after its first publication, it remains a timely and powerful book. The topic with which it deals is still at the heart Baptist theology and church life today. For this reason we have chosen it as the inaugural volume in the Library of Baptist Classics. To place this important work in its proper context, we shall review the life and ministry of its author, examine the circumstances of its writing, and discuss its relevance for the life and faith of the church today.

Basil Manly, Jr. (1825-1892)

Basil Manly, Jr. was born on December 19, 1825 in Edge South Carolina. He came from a noble line of descent. His paternal grandfather, also named Basil, had served as a captain during American Revolution. His father, Basil Manly, Sr., was one of the leading Baptist ministers in the South.^[4] *When Basil, Jr. was still a nursing infant his father became pastor of the historic First Baptist Church of Charleston. When he was twelve the family moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In 1840 Manly, Jr. enrolled as a student in this school where he excelled in all of his studies.*

Under the godly influence of his parents, Manly, Jr. was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. At age fourteen, while reading the biography of Jonathan Edwards, he came under deep personal conviction of sin.

I was brought to such a loathing of myself, for the ingratitude, and neglect, and meanness, as it seemed to me, of disregarding the Savior, and to such an admiration of holiness that I came deliberately and solemnly to the conclusion, that I would try to become a Christian.^[5]

Manly publicly shared his experience in Christ with the Baptist congregation in Tuscaloosa, and was baptized the following week by his father in the Black Warrior River. "The afternoon was very agreeable for the purpose," his father recalled, "the sun overshadowed, dry ground, scene tranquil, and multitudes of people present. I committed him to God, so far as belongs to me, wholly and unreservedly hoping the Lord may like him and use him for his glory."[\[6\]](#)

In May, 1844, Manly was licensed to preach the gospel. Later that year he began his theological studies at the Newton Theological Institute in Massachusetts, the first seminary founded by Baptists in America. In the course of his studies at Newton the Baptist denomination, along with the entire country, became embroiled in a fierce debate over slavery and abolitionism. Two days after the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in Augusta, Georgia, Manly transferred to Princeton Theological Seminary. Here he completed his ministerial preparation under such notable teachers as Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander, and Samuel Miller.

On May 17, 1847, Manly received his diploma indicating that he had successfully completed the required course of study. Two years later another Southerner, James P. Boyce, also enrolled at Princeton. He and Manly, together with John A. Broadus and William Williams, would be linked as partners in the founding of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Boyce, like Manly, drank deeply from the wells of his great Reformed teachers at Princeton. In two important respects Princeton became a model for the first Baptist seminary in the South: first, the commitment to historic Christian orthodoxy expressed in a confession of faith conscientiously subscribed by every member of the faculty; and, secondly, a desire to hold in balance academic excellence and genuine piety, to model the ideal of godly learning.[\[7\]](#)

Following his studies at Princeton, Manly was ordained to the gospel ministry and called to the Providence Baptist Church in Sumter County, Alabama. In September, 1850, Manly, only twenty-four years of age, moved to Richmond, Virginia to begin his pastoral labors at the First Baptist Church in that city. Four years later he resigned to become the founding principal of Richmond Female Institute. During these years he was involved in many activities which had a far-reaching impact on the life of the church: the establishment of Sunday Schools in local congregations, the publication (with his father) of the first Baptist hymnal, the distribution of the Scriptures, the promotion of missionary and benevolence programs, along with numerous writing, preaching, and evangelistic activities.[\[8\]](#) When Southern Seminary opened its doors in Greenville, South Carolina in October, 1859, Manly was one of the four founding faculty members. His official title was Professor of Biblical Introduction and Old Testament although he fulfilled many other roles as well in his long association with this institution. One of his first assignments had been to draft a confessional statement, the Abstract of Principles, it was called, for the new school. Boyce, in setting forth the plan for the Seminary, had stressed the importance of a solid theological foundation.

The doctrinal sentiments of the Faculty are of greater importance than the proper investment and expenditure of its funds; and the trusts devolved upon those who watch over its interests should in that respect, if in any, be sacredly guarded.[\[9\]](#)

Drawing upon earlier Baptist confessional standards such as the First (1644) and Second (1689) London Confessions, Manly proposed an Abstract of Principles which consisted of twenty articles of faith ranging from the Scriptures to the Last Judgment. These articles of faith were included in the Fundamental Laws of the Seminary. Every professor was expected to teach in accordance with and not contrary to these articles. Failure to do so would be considered grounds for his resignation or removal by the trustees.

Manly shared fully in the labors of the young seminary as it struggled to survive amidst the convulsions of the American Civil War, Reconstruction, denominational strife and economic duress. On one occasion the four original founders gathered at the Boyce home in Greenville to join in prayer and a deep seeking of the will of God. At the end of the day Broadus said, "Suppose we quietly agree that the seminary may die, but we will die first."[\[10\]](#) All heads were silently bowed and the matter was decided

From the beginning Manly was greatly beloved by his students for his judicious and reverent handling of the Scriptures.

For him the Bible was never merely a book of ancient history or great literature. He led his students to apply the meaning of the Biblical text to their own spiritual walk. John R. Sampey, who sat in Manly's classes, described the approach of his mentor. "He knew how to unfold the deep spiritual content of the Psalms with rare delight and sympathy. Having himself been chastened by bereavement and affliction, he could put the student into closest sympathy with Job and Jeremiah and other suffering saints. He taught men reverence and resignation and faith."[\[11\]](#)

Manly's reverent approach to teaching the Bible reflected a disciplined life of devotion and prayer. The coinherence of piety and intellect was at the heart of his pedagogical method and made a lasting impression on his students. One of them later recalled the powerful impact of Manly's classroom prayers.

It was the custom at the Seminary, then, as now, to spend a few moments in prayer before each lecture. We have forgotten a great many things in the lectures of Dr. Manly, but we shall carry the memory of his prayers through all eternity. Sometimes he seemed to forget his surroundings and quietly to soar aloft on the wings of prayer-and he carried his student hearers with him near to the throne. When prayer was done we all felt that after all the first and best thing was piety, and yet this very connection quickened our interest in the study of God's Word. Not unfrequently, when the "amen" was said, we had to brush away the tears before we could see our notebooks. After an experience of many years in all sorts of meetings I can deliberately say that nowhere at any time have I felt heaven on earth so sweetly and so powerfully as in Dr. Manly's lecture room.[\[12\]](#)

Manly's tenure as a professor at Southern Seminary was interrupted by an eight-year stint (1871-1879) as President of Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky. Manly had a measure of success in this post although the difficulty of imposing discipline on rowdy under-graduates ("If only I can manage to reduce to order the boisterous boys," he lamented), and the never-ending task of raising enough funds to keep the institution afloat, took their toll.[\[13\]](#)

During his years as President of Georgetown, Manly remained vitally interested in the progress of Southern Seminary. In 1877 the Seminary was moved from Greenville to Louisville. Two years later Manly returned to the seminary to fill the position vacated by Crawford Howell Toy. We turn now to the circumstances which led to this decision as it had a direct bearing on the origin of Manly's Bible Doctrine of Inspiration.

The Toy Controversy

One of the most painful episodes in the history of Southern Baptists was the controversy over Crawford H. Toy, who had joined the faculty of Southern Seminary in 1869. At that time, Toy's commitment to the total truthfulness of Holy Scripture was explicitly stated in his impressive inaugural address: "The Bible, its real assertions being known, is in every iota of its substance absolutely and infallibly true."[\[14\]](#) Over the years, however, Toy gradually moved away from this position as he came more and more under the influence of Darwinian evolutionism and the theory of Pentateuchal criticism advanced by the German scholars Kuenen and Wellhausen. Enamored by the heady theories of "progressive" scholarship, Toy came to deny that many of the events recorded in the Old Testament had actually occurred. Moreover, he also questioned the Christological implications of many messianic prophecies, including Genesis 49:10 which the New Testament (Rev. 5:5) specifically applies to Christ. In 1876 Boyce wrote Toy a "gentle remonstrance and earnest entreaty" concerning his views on inspiration.[\[15\]](#) During the 1878-79 academic year, Toy's teaching became a matter of concern to the seminary trustees, chaired at that time by the venerable Baptist leader J. B. Jeter. Boyce requested Toy to refrain from espousing his radical critical views in the classroom. The latter agreed, but found that he could not do so. In the spring of 1879 Toy, under considerable pressure, tendered his resignation acknowledging that it has become apparent to me that my views of inspiration differ considerably from those of the body of my brethren."[\[16\]](#)

Broadus spoke for Boyce, the faculty, and the trustees (with the exception of two dissenting members) when he characterized the painful necessity of Toy's removal from the seminary community: "Duty to the founders of the institution and to all who had given money for its support and endowment, duty to the Baptist churches from whom its students must

come, required [Boyce] to see to it that such teaching should not continue." Boyce took no joy in the departure of Toy. In a poignant scene at the railway station, Boyce embraced Toy and, lifting his right arm, exclaimed: "Oh, Toy, I would freely give that arm to be cut off if you could be where you were five years ago, and stay there."[\[17\]](#) Toy subsequently became a professor at Harvard University where he affiliated with the Unitarian church and embraced even more radically critical views on the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

At the time the Toy Controversy broke loose, Manly was serving as a member of the seminary's Board of Trustees. He was an active participant in the negotiations which led to Toy's resignation. Both the faculty and the Board felt that only Manly could fill the vacancy. No one else commanded sufficient respect, or possessed adequate scholarly acumen, to restore the damaged credibility of the seminary. With some apprehension, but sensing clearly the leading of divine providence, Manly accepted the new assignment hoping, as he said, "that this move will be my last one "[\[18\]](#)

It is important to note that Manly, no less than Boyce and Broadus, was grieved personally over the forced departure of Toy. There was never any thought of a personal vendetta or witch-hunt. Manly was deeply concerned for Toy's spiritual welfare. He hoped that the shock of the experience might lead his brilliant friend and former student to realize "the extent to which he has drifted from the moorings of his own older position." Regrettably, such was not to be the case. In 1881 Manly reflected on certain writings of Toy which had come to his attention. "I read them . . . with professed sadness, and a despair of the return to truth for a man for whom I have so high a respect, and so sincere an affection. He has breathed an atmosphere of doubt, till it has become his ritual air, and is as firmly convinced of the speculations as others are of the most unequivocal realities."[\[19\]](#) Still, on a personal level, the two men remained friends to the end. When Manly died in 1892, Toy wrote a moving eulogy for his former teacher whom he always held in high esteem.

What was at stake in the Toy Controversy was not merely the deviant views of a single professor but rather the theological integrity of the seminary itself. No one saw this more clearly than Manly who, after all, had originally drafted the Abstract of Principles, including the first article on the Scriptures:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

Toy believed that his views had not violated the confessional commitment of the seminary despite the wide variance between his teaching and that of his colleagues. However, with reference to the Abstract, Manly insisted:

This language must be understood in accordance with the well-known convictions and views of the founders of the Seminary, and of the Baptist denomination generally. While I am accustomed to insist on no theory of the manner in which inspiration was effected, I hold and teach the fact that the Scriptures are so inspired as to possess infallibility and divine authority.[\[20\]](#)

Doubtless, the departure of Toy contributed to the conservative reputation which Southern Seminary enjoyed within the denomination and beyond. Once on a trip for the seminary, Boyce heard about certain students from Crozier Theological School who were trying to dissuade young preachers from coming to Southern because of the "antediluvian theology taught at Louisville." To which Boyce replied, "If my theology were not older than the days of Noah, it wouldn't be worth teaching!"[\[21\]](#)

On October 1, 1888, just two months before he died, Boyce wrote to his colleague, Basil Manly, Jr. With an eye to the Toy controversy which was just beginning to subside, he said:

I greatly rejoice in the certain triumph of the truth. I feel that nothing but our own folly can prevent the success of the seminary. If we keep things orthodox and correct within and avoid injudicious compromises while we patiently submit and laboriously labor, we shall find continuous blessing. So much do I feel this that I look back on my life's work without any apprehension of future disaster.[\[22\]](#)

The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration

On September 1, 1879, Manly delivered his introductory lecture as Professor of Old Testament at Southern Seminary. His topic was "When and How to Study the Bible." Everyone was anxious to hear what the man elected to replace Toy would say in the highly charged atmosphere of the crisis which still loomed over the school.

Manly began by expressing renewed confidence and affection for the Seminary community. Even though "the years have tinged our locks with gray," he urged his colleagues to march on together as "tried soldiers in the conflicts and successes that await us," in the certain knowledge that the work in which they were engaged was not their own but God's.

He then set forth his philosophy of theological education, the primary purpose of which was to provide "a practical knowledge of the Scriptures."

Every school and department of the Seminary is mainly valuable as it promotes the elucidation of the Word of God, and practical application of its teachings. Nor do we fear being charged with Bibliolatry in giving the Bible the central, dominant place in our system and in our affections. From the doubt or denial of God's book, the road is short to doubt or denial of God; and after that come the abyss where all knowledge is not only lost but scoffed at, except that which the brute might enjoy as well.[\[23\]](#)

In this same address he made clear that confidence in the centrality and total truthfulness of the Scriptures in no way lessened the importance of careful, exacting scholarship, including the mastery of the original Biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew, of course, was his own specialty and he referred to it as "the earliest tongue which God saw fit to consecrate, by using it for his written communication to man." He concluded his lecture by asserting, "If we are to be mighty in God's work, we must be mighty in God's word."[\[24\]](#)

Manly's Bible Doctrine of Inspiration grew out of his seminary lectures on this topic. Because of the lingering suspicions from the Toy affair, it was necessary to issue a clear affirmation of the seminary's position of this controverted subject. Manly also hoped to address the wider implications of the assault on the authority of Scripture which stemmed from the acceptance of higher critical theories throughout the Protestant world.

In the summer of 1881, Manly had studies in Germany under Franz Delitzsch at the University of Leipzig. He was well acquainted with the current trends in Biblical scholarship. He also knew that the dangers posed by destructive criticism of the Bible were not limited to his own fellowship. Among English Baptists Charles Haddon Spurgeon and others were seeking to stave off "the boiling mudshowers of modern heresy" which resulted in the Downgrade Controversy.[\[25\]](#) In 1890, two years after Manly's book was published, Charles A. Briggs condemned "the dogma of verbal inspiration" in his inaugural lecture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Although he was suspended from the ministry by the Presbyterian Church, he continued to teach at Union Seminary.

In the face of these developments, Manly drafted his Bible Doctrine of Inspiration as a deliberate restatement of the historic Protestant doctrine of Scripture. Without naming Toy, he reviewed the impact of the so-called "Higher Criticism" on biblical studies and made the following conclusion which has lost none of its relevance in the intervening century: "We have no need nor disposition to undervalue either the legitimate method or the fairly established results of modern critical research... a true "Higher Criticism" may be just as valuable as a false and misguided attempt at it may be dangerous and delusive."

In December, 1886, Manly was assaulted and severely beaten by two robbers as he walked home from the seminary in the evening. For some time he was unable to meet his classes and the following summer was spent in convalescence in Coopers, North Carolina. During this time he completed the manuscript for The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration. The book

was published by k C. Armstrong and Son of New York in April, 1888.

Taken as a whole the work is a classic defense of verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible which he defined thus: "It is that the Bible as a whole is the Word of God, so that in every part of Scripture there is both infallible truth and divine authority." Manly divides his book into three parts in which he first carefully explains the doctrine, then offers proof for it, and then defends it against objections. Manly understood inspiration as that divine influence that secures the accurate transference of truth into human language by a speaker or writer in order to communicate the will and purpose of God to others.

Manly specifically refutes the dictation theory of inspiration and allows fully for both the divine and human element in the process of inspiration. "The Bible is God's Word to man throughout; yet at the same time it is really and thoroughly man's composition. . . . The Word is not of man as to its source, nor depending on man as to its authority. It is by and through man as its medium; yet not simply as its channel along which it runs, like water through a lifeless pipe, but through and by man as the agent voluntarily active and intelligent in its communication.... It is all by singular and accumulated evidence declared to be the Word of God; all written by man, all inspired by God."

Manly's Legacy Today

Basil Manly, Jr., died on January 31, 1892, in his 68th year. At his funeral, John A. Broadus remarked: "He was the most versatile man I ever met. I never saw him try to do anything that he did not do it well. The worth of such a man only God can measure."[\[26\]](#) Manly's legacy lives on today in the institutions he served, in the agencies he helped to establish, in the churches he strengthened, above all, perhaps, in the widening influence of the students he taught through whose ministries the gospel of Jesus Christ has been carried throughout the world. In 1933 the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention honored the memory of both Broadus and Manly by blending the first syllables of their names into "Broadman Press."

The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration was Manly's major literary contribution. At the time of its publication it was highly esteemed by leading evangelical scholars such as Benjamin -B. Warfield at Princeton and Charles Rufus Brown at Newton. Its purpose, as one historian has put it, "was to forestall any trend on the part of the younger generation of ministers towards the denial of the supernatural element in the Bible. It served as an able work in resolving the conflict that had clouded the minds of many truth-seeking Southern Baptist ministers."[\[27\]](#)

In retrospect, we can see how the strong theological foundation laid by Manly and others served Southern Baptists well in the generation which followed them. In the first three decades of the twentieth century nearly every major Protestant denomination in America was wracked by the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. Many theological seminaries founded by godly men to train young ministers in the truth of God's Word succumbed to the alluring tenets of liberalism and the destructively critical study of the Bible. During this period Southern Baptists remained overwhelmingly committed to a high doctrine of Holy Scripture. This view, which Manly had summarized so ably, was set forth with clarity in 1900 by James M. Frost in a book dedicated "to the Baptists of the world in their contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints":

We accept the Scriptures as an all-sufficient and infallible rule of faith and practice, and insist upon the absolute inerrancy and sole authority of the Word of God. We recognize at this point no room for division, either of practice or belief, or even sentiment. More and more we must come to feel as the deepest and mightiest power of our conviction that a "thus saith the Lord" is the end of all controversy.[\[28\]](#)





- ¹ Henry C. Vedder, review of *Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, *Baptist Quarterly Review* 11 (1889) 253.
- ² Letter of Alexander Maclaren to Basil Manly, June 5, 1888.
- ³ *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* [(New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 5:387.
- ⁴ Timothy George, "Faithful Shepherd, Beloved Minister: The Life and Legacy of Basil Manly, Sr.," *The Alabama Baptist Historian* 27 (1991).
- ⁵ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, October 8, 1869.
- ⁶ *Diary of Basil Manly, Sr.* (1834-1846), 202.
- ⁷ This spirit is expressed in the following statement of Samuel Miller who taught both Manly and Boyce: "Resolved, that I will endeavor, by the grace of God, to set such an example for the candidates for the ministry committed to my care as shall convince them that, though I esteem theological knowledge and all its auxiliary branches of science very highly, I esteem genuine and deep piety as a still more vital and important qualification." William L. McEwan, "Princeton in the Work of the Pastorate," *The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Princeton, NJ.: The Theological Seminary, 1912): 404-05.
- ⁸ Manly's contribution to Southern Baptist hymnody, a see Paul A. Richardson, "Basil Manly, Jr.: Hymnist and Hymnologist," Founders' Day Address, February 4, 1992, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- ⁹ Boyce's inaugural address, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," delivered before the Board of Trustees of Furman University, July 31, 1856. See Timothy George, ed., *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 52.
- ¹⁰ John A. Broadus, *Memoir of J. P. Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 200.
- ¹¹ John R. Sampey, "B. Manly, Jr." *Review and Expositor* 5 (1908), 414-15.
- ¹² William H. Williams, "An Old Student Reminisces," *The Seminary Magazine* (April, 1892), 390-91.
- ¹³ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Sarah M. Manly, October 9, 1871.
- ¹⁴ C. H. Toy, *The Claims of Biblical Interpretation on Baptists* (New York: Lange and Hillman, 1869), 13.
- ¹⁵ A.T. Robertson, *The Life and Letters of John A. Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901),

301.

¹⁶ Quoted, L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 233.

¹⁷ Broadus, *Memoir*, 263-64.

¹⁸ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, May 15, 1879.

¹⁹ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, December 24, 1881.

²⁰ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Norman Fax, January 4, 1882.

²¹ George, *Boyce*, 23.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Basil Manly, Jr., "Why and How to Study the Bible," *Manly Pamphlets*, September 1, 1879, 1-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), 4:281-62.

²⁶ Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 398.

²⁷ Cox, *Manly, Jr.*, 344.

²⁸ James M. Frost, ed., *Baptist Why and Why Not* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1900), 12.



- ¹ Henry C. Vedder, review of *Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, *Baptist Quarterly Review* 11 (1889) 253.
- ² Letter of Alexander Maclaren to Basil Manly, June 5, 1888.
- ³ *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* [(New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 5:387.
- ⁴ Timothy George, "Faithful Shepherd, Beloved Minister: The Life and Legacy of Basil Manly, Sr.," *The Alabama Baptist Historian* 27 (1991).
- ⁵ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, October 8, 1869.
- ⁶ *Diary of Basil Manly, Sr.* (1834-1846), 202.
- ⁷ This spirit is expressed in the following statement of Samuel Miller who taught both Manly and Boyce: "Resolved, that I will endeavor, by the grace of God, to set such an example for the candidates for the ministry committed to my care as shall convince them that, though I esteem theological knowledge and all its auxiliary branches of science very highly, I esteem genuine and deep piety as a still more vital and important qualification." William L. McEwan, "Princeton in the Work of the Pastorate," *The Centennial Celebration of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Princeton, NJ.: The Theological Seminary, 1912): 404-05.
- ⁸ Manly's contribution to Southern Baptist hymnody, a see Paul A. Richardson, "Basil Manly, Jr.: Hymnist and Hymnologist," Founders' Day Address, February 4, 1992, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- ⁹ Boyce's inaugural address, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," delivered before the Board of Trustees of Furman University, July 31, 1856. See Timothy George, ed., *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), 52.
- ¹⁰ John A. Broadus, *Memoir of J. P. Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1893), 200.
- ¹¹ John R. Sampey, "B. Manly, Jr." *Review and Expositor* 5 (1908), 414-15.
- ¹² William H. Williams, "An Old Student Reminisces," *The Seminary Magazine* (April, 1892), 390-91.
- ¹³ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Sarah M. Manly, October 9, 1871.
- ¹⁴ C. H. Toy, *The Claims of Biblical Interpretation on Baptists* (New York: Lange and Hillman, 1869), 13.
- ¹⁵ A.T. Robertson, *The Life and Letters of John A. Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901), 301.
- ¹⁶ Quoted, L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 233.
- ¹⁷ Broadus, *Memoir*, 263-64.

¹⁸ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, May 15, 1879.

¹⁹ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Charles Manly, December 24, 1881.

²⁰ Letter of Basil Manly, Jr. to Norman Fax, January 4, 1882.

²¹ George, *Boyce*, 23.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Basil Manly, Jr., "Why and How to Study the Bible," *Manly Pamphlets*, September 1, 1879, 1-5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1900), 4:281-62.

²⁶ Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 398.

²⁷ Cox, *Manly, Jr.*, 344.

²⁸ James M. Frost, ed., *Baptist Why and Why Not* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, 1900), 12.



An Encouragement to Use Catechisms (Part 2)

[Tom J. Nettles](#)

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(The first part of this article is found in FJ 10 and consists of historical testimonies to the usefulness of catechetical instruction for believers. This is the second of three installments on the subject by Dr. Nettles.)

The Bible Encourages Their Use

In addition to the lessons of history, Scripture itself encourages the use of catechisms in our efforts to be transformed by the biblical message. The divine out-breathings which produced Scripture create both an assumption and a purpose which are consistent with this approach to instruction. The assumption is the authority, sufficiency, and consistency of Scripture; the purpose is the increase of spiritual maturity in the children of God.

Examples or models of instruction used by the first-century church abound in Scripture, both in method and content. These make it clear that the use of summaries, readily digestible portions of revelatory truth, make for effective instruction in the church. In addition, implicit admonitions for this form of education are scattered throughout the pages of the Bible and mixed with the models mentioned above.

The catechetical approach should not be used to serve any fascination with systems and abstractions or to puff one's self up with speculative knowledge instead of increased love for God (1 Cor. 8:1). Instead, it is one way that Christians may enhance their ability to use Scripture in accordance with its purpose. Instruction with this kind of precision constitutes an obedient response to the Bible itself and fulfills biblical principles undergirding the process of disciple making.

Fulfillment of Scripture's Purpose

Preaching, teaching, and meditation (biblical means of spiritual growth) require slightly different emphases in the use of Scripture and accomplish slightly different tasks in conforming us to Christ. Preaching comes in the form of a proclamation, challenging and correcting our thoughts and actions, teaching us of the grace of God in the gospel, and calling us to deeper repentance and obedience. Teaching, no more content-oriented nor less confrontive than preaching, employs a format less monologic and more oriented toward questioning and discussion. Meditation involves extended personal appraisal of one's own thoughts and actions in comparison to the beauty and holy character of God as revealed in Scripture and impressed on the heart by the Holy Spirit.

In each of these, not only does the person who is well catechized have a distinct advantage, the use of a catechetical approach is a basic element of the procedure itself. Those who have good scripture knowledge gain more from good preaching. If, in addition, they have been trained to see the coherent structure of biblical truth and can define its leading principles, their knowledge of Scripture is more precise and thorough. The consequent benefit from preaching in-creases. More will be said about this in the discussion of practical advantages.

A well-catechized hearer doesn't view the words and ideas of the preacher as isolated fragments of truth; he

understands them as constituent elements of the "one faith" which must govern our efforts to achieve "unity in the faith." Matthew Henry, a seventeenth-century Puritan biblical scholar, states, "Catechizing does to the preaching of the word the same good office that John the Baptist did to our Saviour; it prepares the way, and makes its paths straight, and yet like him does but say the same things."

This relationship between preparatory instruction and purity of worship was woven into the very fabric of the history of Israel. The people were commanded to instruct their children in the ways of God. When an Israelite child asked his father, "What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you?" the parent was to answer with a summary of the mighty works of God for the redemption of the people (Deut. 6:20-25). These acts of God might be more fully expounded in other contexts, but the summary served as a basis of all conduct and worship.

One could conclude that the entire history of Israel was catechetical preparation for Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Of course, it was much more than that. Peter explained what the people observed with the words, "This is what was spoken..." (Acts 2:16) and the explanation was sufficient. His appeal to the attestation of Jesus' ministry by miracles, wonders, and signs (2:22) was consistent with their understanding of God's activity in pivotal redemptive eras of their history (Moses and Elijah). His recitation of the Messianic prophecies through David made immediate appeal to the orientation of his audience. Also, his references to the pouring out of the Spirit did not refer simply to Jesus' promises during his earthly ministry about the coming of the comforter. This would have meant little to Peter's audience. More likely he referred to the coming of the Spirit as the sign of ultimate redemption and the new covenant (Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:27; 39:29; Jeremiah 31:31-34). Peter's announcement of Jesus as both "Lord" and "Christ" met with immediate understanding and conviction. Both words were filled with meaning for the hearers and the string of evidence he presented pointed to the conclusion they drew.

I am not contending that a strong background of knowledge when combined with a compelling argument always makes a convert. NE conviction or conversion will come without the effectual working of the Spirit of God (Eph. 1:19; Col. 2:11, 12). A connection, however, between prior knowledge and proclamation is a part of God's ordained means of salvation.

The same is seen in Paul's sermon at Athens. He appealed to what he knew they had discerned from general revelation and had put within their system of worship (Acts 17:22-29). In a sense, nature and conscience had catechized them.

Also, more quickly than those not so trained, those catechized become capable of preaching and teaching. The appeal of preaching he in proclaiming the new (whether it be insight into content or application) based on known truth. Jesus said, "Every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Mt. 13:52). The scribes were the most thoroughly educated people of Israel during the time of our Lord. They were professional students of the law and gathered around themselves pupils to whom they taught the law and the oral tradition which accompanied it, much of which they themselves produced. They taught their students to pass on this content without alteration. Jesus indicates that the person with scribal training, when converted and freed of the idol of human tradition, is capable of teaching others the truths of the kingdom of God. He can understand and communicate how Christian revelation relates to the new challenges the world constantly presents. He gives insight in how one can make fresh applications of the unchangeable truths divine revelation.

Apollos, before he met Aquila and Priscilla, was literally "catechized" in the way of the Lord and was teaching with accuracy the things concerning Jesus (Acts 18:25). Upon receiving more accurate instruction concerning some details, he continued his teaching being of great help to believers and an irrefutable apologist for the faith in public

debate with the Jews (Acts 18:27, 28). It was no small contribution to his eventual effectiveness that he was so thoroughly "catechized."

The biblical evidence for the value of catechisms is not derived solely from inference. The specific admonitions of Scripture support the use of this method. "Teach them diligently to thy children" and "talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" were the instructions accompanying the second giving of the commandments (Deut. 6). This sort of instruction included memorization of fundamental precepts. The psalmist assumes the existence of this knowledge in his numerous exhortations to meditate in the law of the Lord. No meditation can occur where no content is present; and the more accurate and precise the content, the more edifying and uplifting the meditation.

David says, "The unfolding of thy words gives light" (Ps. 119:130 NASB). The word for "unfolding" may mean "entrance" or "opening." Its root often is used metaphorically for "understanding" or, in a phrase, "grasping the true meaning." The illumination of the Holy Spirit alone accomplishes this, particularly as it relates to one's transformation by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). From a human standpoint, however, the purpose of a catechism is to present true contextual understanding of the biblical revelation. It can give significant and enlightening help in the Christian privilege of meditation on the truths of divine revelation, a practice which gives understanding to the simple.

Admonitions and Examples

Much of the educational task of the church today is parallel with that of the Levites in Nehemiah's day. When the Israelites were at the threshold of recovering their significance as the people of God, central to this reorientation was the learning of the word of God. Ezra led the scribes and the Levites in intensive sessions with the people: "They read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understanding the reading" (Ezra 8:1-8).

Scripture itself gives clear warrant to the use of external aids in order to enhance and accelerate biblical understanding. The Levites "gave the sense." Preeminently, the preacher serves in that capacity; but providing the same kind of touchstone given by the "rule of faith" in the early Christian centuries, a catechism helps perform the same function. When it has a comprehensive scriptural orientation and is organized logically, a catechism can enhance understanding and give immense help in grasping the sense of Scripture.

Summaries of faith, either in confessional or catechetical form, appear in the New Testament. These are used in situations where strong clear reminders of the distinctiveness of the Christian faith are needed. They serve to exhort, encourage, warn and edify. Bits and pieces of confessions, or perhaps catechetical responses, are very likely present in such passages as Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Timothy 1:15-17; 3:12-16; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; 2:11-13; and Titus 1:11-14.

The faith Paul mentions in Eph 4:5, 13 could be the experience of grace of faith. Another and more likely possibility is that it denote an objective faith, that is a body of teaching. The context seems to favor that understanding. Paul emphasizes the gift of pastor-teacher in verse 11 and, in verse 13, has in mind a doctrinal core around which believers should be united. This is contrasted to the instability of the doctrine characteristic of deceitful teachers in verse 14. At any rate, the words in verses 5 and 6 have an easily memorable form which expressed a foundational and minimal confessional standard for some first-century Christian churches. The simple but clear and exclusive confession could serve as an effective shield of faith against many fiery first-century darts of false teaching.

The phrase "a faithful saying" (literally *Faithful the word*), in Timothy 1:15 and 3:1 and 4:9, introduces a

confessional, or perhaps catechetical formula. The sentences which follow could possibly stand alone as pithy and pregnant epigrams, "one-liner" confessions such as "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." More likely they are part of larger statements as in 1 Timothy 3:16. That particular confession called by Paul "The Mystery of Godliness" begins with a phrase which contains an adverbial form of the word "confess" and literally translates "confessedly great." Idiomatically it means "undeniably." That which is "confessed" with such certainty is a six-article Christological confession.

Apparently, Paul considered this confession a helpful safeguard against the encroachment of heresy, for immediately in 1 Timothy 4:6, Paul warns Timothy about the errors of ascetic dualism. That heresy by implication denies the goodness of creation as well as the reality of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and bodily ascension of Christ into heaven. Paul points to the "words of faith" and the inherently good, noble and praiseworthy doctrine he has been following. He uses the same word to describe the "teaching" (v.6) as he does to describe the inherent goodness of the creation (v.4).

The phrase "words of faith" in verse 6 has a strong verbal relationship to the "faithful sayings" in 1:15, 3:1,4:9, and 2 Tim. 2:11. The first uses the noun form of "faith" and the second uses the adjective form. Conceptually, Paul is making the same affirmation. A "faithful saying" incorporates words which summarize certain truths of the faith; thus, "words of faith" becomes "faithful words", or "faithful sayings." These are in turn identified with "the sound doctrine" (NASB) Timothy has been following.

Paul is reminding Timothy that spiritual and doctrinal nourishment he received in his early instruction is a strong, and even essential, foundation for an effective ministry with the people of God. Verse 9 then repeats the formula "It is a faithful saying and worthy of full acceptance" that exercising oneself to godliness (v.7) striving and laboring for life now and to come (vv.8, 10) are all part of putting one's hope in the living God "who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe."

These faithful sayings consisted of the teaching of the apostles and N. T. prophets (the foundational gifts to the church) and served as the Christ-centered guide to the interpretation of the O. T. Scriptures and as paths to life in the presence of the Living God.

In 2 Timothy 1:8, Paul encourages Timothy not to be ashamed of the "testimony of our Lord." The word "testimony" which serves to translate two Greek words contains a rich fabric of meaning. Among the several things that both unite are the following: an event, word, or thing that serves as proof or evidence (John 8:17); a personal conviction about the truth which can not be compromised no matter what the consequences (2 Cor. 1:12); the spoken message about Christ's person and work (1 Cor. 1:16); and, in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, it refers specifically to the martyr's death. In 1 Tim. 2:6 the "testimony" is used as an appositive to "ransom." The death of Christ was thus Christ's personal witness to and irrefutable evidence of the truth that there is one God and that reconciliation is possible only through a mediator who provides an effectual ransom (*antilutron*). The death of Christ speaks volumes, infinite volumes, about the unique efficacy of the gospel; it is the testimony in God's ordained time. And to that specific testimony that Christ made in his death Paul was appointed a preacher, and apostle, and a teacher. When he speaks of the "testimony of our Lord," therefore, in 2 Tim. 1:8 he has in mind that historical witness of Christ in his passion which is communicated to all generations in the words called the Gospel ("be a fellow-sufferer in the gospel").

John's Angel in Revelation 19:10 speaks of those messengers who "hold the testimony of Jesus." Indeed, the angel continues, the "testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." Isaiah, when hounded by the false religionists of his day to consult mediums, replied, "To the law and to the *testimony*! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn" (Isa. 8:20 NASB).

The testimony of our Lord, or the testimony of Jesus, is the fulfillment of all the prophets. This testimony (*marturion*) is given a form so that witnesses (*martus*) may testify (*martureo*) verbally. An elevated prose portion of that testimony is presented in the words of verses 9 and 10 of 2 Tim. 1: "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but has now been manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who destroyed death on the one hand, and, on the other, brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Timothy also is admonished to "guard the deposit" and follow the pattern or standard of "sound words" given him. This deposit and these sound words he was to entrust to faithful men who would be able to teach others. Paul had already written against those who live in a moral squalor opposed to the "sound teaching which is according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1:10-11). In 1 Tim. 6:3, Paul warns Timothy against those who want to teach other things and will not receive "sound words." Nor will they receive "the teaching" that according to godliness. Instead, they are men who understand nothing and, among other things, are deprived of the truth. He gives similar instruction to Titus that he would select overseers who hold firmly to the sure word which is in accord with "the teaching." This is so they may exhort others in "the teaching, the sound teaching" and may reprove those who oppose them.

2 Tim. 3:14, 15 pictures Timothy as having learned from his grandmother, mother, and Paul's sets of truths stated not exactly in Scripture language but founded upon Scripture truth. In the same vein the writer of Hebrews speaks of the need of some to be instructed in the "elementary principles of the Oracles of God" (5:12).

Paul's emphasis on "the teaching," the "deposit," the "sound teaching," the "sound words," and his instruction that it serve as corrective guideline to false teachings, false teachers, and nonessential subtleties creates a form with clearly recognizable features. Thomas Watson and Matthew Henry are convinced that the "form, pattern, standard of sound words" is a type of catechism: "the first principles of the oracles of God."

The apostles and other teachers in the New Testament worked with several clear, concise, verbally friendly confessional and catechetical devices to establish a foundation for the entire teaching ministry. The practice of learning by exact verbal patterns was well established, by divine mandate, in Jewish culture. A continuance that would not only be natural but an expected response to the divine disclosure of the words of the gospel. Nothing should hinder the conclusion that memorization of the deposit of truth is biblical. The catechism appears to meet this need most acceptably (See Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*).

Sola Scriptura

Some object to catechisms because they fear a tendency to replace Scripture. If viewed in terms of the medieval practice, such a fear might have legitimacy, In addition the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy: produced an implicit creedalism that was opposed by the founder of the pietist movement. While Pietism developed its own set of problems, its renewed emphasis on Bible study was a needed practical application of the Protestant emphasis on *sola scriptura*. The most consistent practice in Protestantism, however, gives positive relief to this important concern. Spurgeon noted the tendency of this fear and addressed it forcefully:

If there were any fear that Scripture would be displaced by handbooks of theology, we should be the first to denounce them; but there is not the shadow of a reason for such a dream, since the most Bible-reading of all the nations is that in which the Assembly's Catechism is learned by almost

every mother's son [cited in Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, s.v. Creeds, advantageous).

Matthew Henry, in his "Sermon Concerning the Catechizing of Youth," expressed, a century before Spurgeon, the same confidence:

Bear us witness, we set up no other rule and practice, no other oracle, no other touchstone or test of orthodoxy, but the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: these are the only fountains whence we fetch our knowledge;...and far be it from us that we should set up any form of words in competition with it, much less in contradiction to it; or admit any rival with it in the conduct an guardianship of our souls, as some do the traditions of the church, and others I know not what light within. Every other help we have for our souls we make use of as *regula regulata* - "a rule controlled"; in subordination and subserviency to the Scripture; and among the rest our catechisms and confessions of faith [*The Complete Works of Matthew Henry* 2 vols. (Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1979) 2:159, 160].

Allow a contemporary to testify to the eminently safe and edifying character of a scriptural catechism. In his introduction to his own revised version of Keach's Catechism, Paul King Jewett anticipates this objection with a strong answer:

It would be anomalous indeed to say that in teaching that the Scripture is the only rule of faith and practice, the catechism is setting itself in the place of Scripture. All that the authors of our catechism have sought to do is to state in a plain, orderly and concise manner what the Scripture teaches. And do we any less in the sermon, which is the very central act of evangelical worship? What is a sermon, or at least what ought it to be, but a clear and forceful statement in the preacher's own words of what the Scripture means? And if this may be done in a sermon, why may it not be done in a catechism?

[\[To Part 3\]](#)



Intercessory Prayer: The Minister's Duty

Martin Holdt

When I was a third year theological student, I was anxious to know that, upon graduation, I would find myself in God's work and service and that I would enjoy, in the biblical sense of the word, the highest measure of success. I noted that a certain pastor in our country was exercising a ministry which was being owned of God¹ so I wrote to him and asked pointed questions about his success and his ministry. His reply consisted of two-and-a-half pages of sound pastoral advice. His answer to my question about prayer was modest and humble, but it did indicate one thing, that prayer was a major factor in his life.

My years of training were invaluable, but I have often wondered why there was never as much as a mention of the theology of prayer. In the history of Presbyterianism, the whole matter of the pastor and his commitment to intercessory prayer has been an integral part of the ordination service, particularly when it came to addressing the man regarding his duties and responsibilities to his congregation.

Tragically, the work of intercessory prayer has become an under-emphasized part of the pastor's calling today. It is seldom, if ever, the subject for consideration at conferences. For 25 years, an Evangelical and Reformed Conference has been held in South Africa. Through all those years I can recall only one conference where a slot was given to this subject. It is not overstating the case to say that pastoral intercessory prayer has been largely neglected in our day.

Recently Maurice Roberts wrote an arresting article in a *Banner of Truth* magazine. He described the scene in England, but what he observed is equally true of the USA and South Africa. He pointed out that although the land was covered with teaching points where the Word of God is being soundly taught and expounded, and although good, sound evangelical literature is circulating in the British Isles, there seems to be few inroads into the kingdom of darkness.

Though we believe that spiritual conditions are all determined by the sovereignty of God, we also believe that God's people are meant to be responsible bearers of light and truth. Maurice Roberts then poses the question, "Have we forgotten to pray?"

Cast your minds across the stretches of biblical history. There is one continuous account of men inspired by God the Holy Spirit, calling upon the living God and imploring His mercy in times of need. With Abraham, God's covenant child, the Biblical record is clear. He understood the part prayer played in his powerful pilgrimage. God disclosed to him the secret of his purposes, and when He did that,

Abraham rushed to the throne of Grace to implore the mercy of God upon the righteous in Sodom. Would God, for the sake of 50, 40, 30 and even fewer righteous, spare those who were worthy? God heard his cry and remembering Abraham, delivered Lot.

The life of Jacob teaches us that when the covenant is in force, where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Can you find a more moving prayer than Jacob's cry, "I will not let you go except you bless me?" Here is a man who at least understood one thing-that in the providence of God, it is impossible to consider a pilgrimage of faith if intercessory prayer does not feature prominently?

What shall we say of Moses? God once declared that the people were worthy of immediate judgment. Moses then came forward and made his plea. In his intercession there is holy argument: "God, what about Your reputation, what will the heathen say, how can this be?" What holy respect, what an anxious plea, what concern for the honor of the Living God!

Time and again Moses stood between a judgment deserving people and a sin-avenging God. Here was a man of God, interceding for his people, arguing the case on the grounds of God's holy and gracious Name. And God heard, and the nation was spared.

Every chapter in redemptive history features men at prayer. Consider Nehemiah and the broken-down walls of Jerusalem. He appears as a man given to intercessory supplication. Ezra was exactly the same. David stressed the necessity of prayer. All the prophets were characterized as intercessors of the first rank.

Consider the example of Jesus. We excuse ourselves from prayer because of our busy schedules. Was there ever a man as busy as Jesus? Have you ever noticed the setting in which Mark 1:35 is put? It reads: "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before day-light, He went out and departed to a solitary place and there He prayed." The Holy Son of God was spending the early hours of the morning, before the rising of the sun, approaching His Heavenly Father, renewing His spiritual strength and vigor as He prepared Himself for the coming day.

However, look at the setting! "At evening when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon possessed and the whole city was gathered together at the door, and then He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons and He did not allow the demons to speak because they knew Him" (vs. 32). What unbelievable pressure! The verses following read: "Simon and his companions went and searched for Him and when they found Him they said, 'Everyone is looking for you!'" Whereas the stress and strain of ministry tempt us toward "burn-out," they moved our Savior to intercession! See Him crouched before the Father on High in the early hours of the morning.

His whole life is interspersed with prayer. As He approaches the cross, He takes His disciples with Him and again teaches the necessity of praying. It was an inseparable baptism of suffering. Have you ever read anything more soul moving than His High Priestly prayer? In Gethsemane and in the agony of the cross, the Son of God was preoccupied with communion with the Father even as His Holy wrath was being poured upon His darling Son in order to pay for the sins of His people. Even then, He had the mind to pray! It would be absurd not to see the importance of walking in His steps.

Acts 6 is a fascinating passage. It begins with these words: "Now in those days when the number of Grecian Jews among them complained against those of the Aramaic speaking community because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the twelve gathered together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.'"

We notice, first of all, unprecedented church growth which brings with it the unusual demands for pastoral attention. The church was multiplying because of the sovereign grace of God. With growth came an unexpected pastoral problem which threatened to get out of hand. There was tension between two potentially explosive groups. It arose over the issue of food distribution. When a matter touches the stomach it becomes dangerous. Some of us would have panicked. However, with them there was a refusal to deal with the issue by the leadership. They delegated the responsibility.

Can you imagine a leadership today with a hands-off attitude to a matter as serious as that? Starvation was the issue? One of the leading Evangelical and Reformed pastors in my home country some time ago grudgingly afforded some of my friends thirty minutes of his time when they had flown over a thousand miles to see him. His reason--the same that influenced these apostles in Acts 6: We must give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word."

The first ministerial function, as far as these men were concerned, was prayer. They had learned well. The two functions of the ministry-prayer and preaching-cannot be separated. Ministers must of necessity pray as all people do. They must do what all Christians do: pre-empt the day with prayer, end the day with prayer, point the day with prayer. But they must go beyond that.

The people of the early church, according to Acts 2:42, gave themselves to prayer. But the pastors went beyond that. They refused to undertake a noble responsibility in the local at the expense of the essential ministry of prayer.

While prayerlessness abounds, unbelief and secularism are making inroads into the Evangelical Church. Our only hope today is an abandonment to prayer. Prayer is our common duty, but it is particularly the duty of those of us who are called into the gospel ministry. In the Old Testament, people expected prayer of their leaders. Samuel considered it a sin not to pray for the people. David prayed and the plague was stopped. Hezekiah prayed in a national crisis, and God heard.

For all of their diligence and faithfulness, these Old Testament saints could not pray as we may with our faith in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. They could not pray as we do in the full consciousness of the glorious privileges set out for us in Hebrews 10:19-22, "Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is His Body, and since we have a great Priest over the House of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Study Paul's prayers. Study the details. Study the passion, the precision, the emphasis, the pastoral heart. As he carries upon his heart the burdens of the churches, he knows that by God's divine appointment, his highest calling, as an under-shepherd of the flock, is to invoke the Great Shepherd on behalf of the flock.

There is no special efficacy in ministers' prayers. Only Christ has the efficacy. Since ministers are called to a special priesthood, the basis of our praying is always the mediatorial work of Christ. Our work as pastors is not to present a sacrifice for men, but to persuade them to believe a Sacrifice already offered. However, it is precisely on that basis that we plead with God on behalf of men.

In that sense, prayer is our highest work. It is hard work. It is a fight against the adversary. It is a battle against the flesh.

It is essential work. The minister who does not pray for his flock, is no minister at all. He is proud because he does his work as if he can succeed without God's power. He shows no pity because he does not realize that his people's greatest need is the Lord's favors upon them. Be assured of this, if the minister does not pray, he will pay a high price.

Consider the sobering remarks of John Smith:

Prayer is the life and soul of the sacred function; without it, we can expect no success in our

ministry; without it our best instructions are barren and our most painful labors idle. Before we can strike terror into those who break the law, we must first, like Moses, spend much time with God in retirement; prayer often gains a success to little talents, while the greatest without it are useless or pernicious. A minister who is not a man of piety and prayer, whatever his other talents may be, cannot be called a servant of God, but rather a servant of Satan, chosen by him for the same reason that he chose the serpent of old because he was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. What a monster, oh God, must that minister of religion be, that dispenser of the ordinances of the gospel, that intercessor between God and His people, that reconciler of man to his Maker, if he sees himself not as a man of prayer.

God often gives those blessings meant for the people in answer to the pastor's prayer. We are to bring their needs before Him, we are to lament their sin, we are to pray for the sinner's conversion and for the saint's edification, and woe to us if we do not! While ministers need to be in the forefront of the ministry of prayer, all who believe need to have the same concern. If ever the Church is, by God's design, to blossom, Christians must learn to pray.

I thank God for six women who two years ago pledged to pray for me daily-and none of them is in my church!

Ministers do not follow a career. A minister is captive to divine service and he cannot serve God without prayer. When Paul writes to the Romans, he wants them to know this (Rom. 1:8). Following his introduction, and before he moves into the rest of his letter to the church in Rome, he employs the oath saying, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (1:9). He employs the oath to assure believers of his work in this regard. It is the first duty he mentions.

There are far too many things that are expected of the pastor. If we did all that was expected of us, we would never pray. If you go back to Acts 6, you will notice that when that priority was established, the results were phenomenal. Our ministry is not results-oriented, but when by God's design, these men did what it was their duty to do, "the Word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." It may not always be the same with us, but our work will never be unblessed. There will never be evangelistic potency without intercessory prayer.

These are ten important features of biblical praying which should be remembered:

First, it is a *necessity*. God has no dumb children, much less dumb servants. When that Pharisee of Pharisees, Saul of Tarsus, was converted he immediately commenced praying. When the angel announced this conversion to Ananias, the chief description which was given of Saul was, "Behold, he is praying." It was as if the angel were saying, "He's never done it before." Previously he went through the motions. Now that he's experienced the Spirit of adoption, and is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, he is praying and his voice is heard. It has now become a necessity for him. Without prayer a man cannot be a Christian.

The second mark of true prayer is *urgency*. It follows that the moment a new born soul begins to appreciate the glories of his translation from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light, he also begins to see the world as a place in which God's Name has been dishonored. He then urgently implores in terms of, "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:6) and, "It is time for You to act, O Lord; for Your law is being broken" (Psalm 119:126). The denial of God's authority and sovereignty is a call for divine action. Do you know something of that urgency?

The third essential of prayer is to *value its critical importance*. We are helpless without it. We get nowhere without

it. Our Lord came back from the Mount of Transfiguration to a sad scene: a group of helpless disciples in the face of incredible human need. They say to Him, "What is wrong?" He tells them that, in essence, they have yet to learn to pray. How are we going to break through gates of brass? We, too, sometimes seem to stand so helpless before human need. Have we forsaken the secret place of the Most High to our own sad loss and the powerlessness of the pulpit? May God awaken us!

Helplessness is the fourth factor. In Psalm 50:7-12, God declares His self-sufficiency. In that context He teaches us our dispensability and helplessness. God does not need our prayers. We need Him. He does not need us! Prayerfulness is Calvinism at its best. It is a simple, open, honest declaration, in the presence of God, of total helplessness. If salvation is of the Lord, and if people are to be converted, it shall be by God's grace, and by God's power and through the Gospel. It is never because of who I am, but in spite of it all. The propensity to pride is there, and it will destroy us if we are not on our guard. If we do not pray, God is not at a loss as to what to do about a situation.

When Mordecai tried to impress upon Esther the importance of her intervention in the national crisis that was threatening the future existence of the Jews, and when she was more concerned about her own self-protection than anything else, his message amounted to this: "Have you ever considered, Esther, that you are not indispensable? If you do nothing about it, deliverance will arise from another quarter. God is not dependent on you. But, who knows? Perhaps you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this? Why not rise to the occasion rather than lose out?"

If I cease to pray, God's plans will continue. He will still build His Church, the gates of Hell will not prevail against her, and every man, woman and child destined to be brought into the Kingdom of God, will be brought. But *I* will suffer for my prayerlessness.

Fifthly, *constancy*. David prayed seven times a day. Daniel, three times a day. Luther, meeting a friend in the street, would say, "Brother, do I find you praying?"

Sixthly, *contentment*. Why were prayers ever recorded in Scripture? Why did the Holy Spirit deem it important that we should have columns and columns of Holy Writ given to the prayers that were offered by Daniel, Nehemiah, Paul, and Jesus Christ? He did it so that you could be taught how to pray. Oh, that prayers would assume a more Biblical character! Oh, that prayers would be an expression of the will of God as it is set down in Scripture!

Seventhly, *importunity*. That is, understanding God's will and bringing it all back to Him for His attention. It is giving God no rest until He gives peace to Jerusalem. After all, it is the will of God that His Jerusalem, the Body of Christ, should be resplendent with His Glory, and a praise to God in the earth. If the Church is not what it was called to be, should we not implore the mercy of God to make His Body an honor to His name in this poor miserable world? Did Jesus not give us the parable of the importunate widow in the words of Luke 18:1, "That men ought always to pray and not lose heart?" How serious are you about your concern for the Church of God?

Eighthly, *certainty*. This means faith. That has nothing to do with God giving us a type of blank check for us to fill in the details. Faith is founded in God's will. Faith discovers the heart of God in the pages of Scripture. Faith acquaints itself with the vision of God. Faith reads moving prayers, such as John 17. "Father," prays Jesus, "I desire that they also, whom You gave me, may be with me where I am, that they may see the glory which You have given me, for You loved me before the foundation of the world, and I want them with me, all of them." Faith takes cognizance of this expression of the Savior's will, and carries it to God all over again. It lays it at His feet. Faith pleads: "Father, Your people, for whom Christ prayed, need to be carried on eagles' wings. Take them safely through the passage of this wicked and hostile world. Take them through the gates of death into their eternal home in Glory." Martin Luther might have sounded impudent in the manner in which he prayed when he was overheard to say, "Father, I will have

my will because I know that my will is Your will." However, he had understood the Father's will and had given expression to it in prayer.

Ninthly, *extent*. When the believer has a mind that reaches far beyond the limits of men's little minds, and looks beyond the horizons to see and understand the glorious purposes of God in redemption, he prays in keeping with God's goal in redemption. "Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for an inheritance," says the Father to the Son. The believer takes it up in prayer. His highest joy and his greatest delight is to know that rebels bend the knee to the Son of God, that they touch the scepter stretched out to them, and that they are then saved by grace. The believer, on bended knee, covets one thing more than anything, and that is that Christ should have a following, a following which adores Him. He longs for a following which admires Him. Every intercessor can identify with Spurgeon, of whom Archibald Brown once said, "He loved Him, he adored Him, he was our Lord's delighted captive." When Paul prayed, he thought big. See his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. Think big when you pray!

Finally, *the goal*. The goal is the glory of God. "Hallowed be Your name." "Let the name of George Whitefield perish," said that man, "But let the name of Christ live on and on forever!" When Jesus Himself lifted up His eyes to Heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son that your Son also may glorify You. And now, O Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." The believer responds immediately with a hearty, "So be it."

We were once visited by a man who told us the story of their anxiety at the fact that at the age of twelve, their daughter had not yet been converted. They prayed, they fasted. Nothing seemed to happen, until one day he suggested to his wife that they should perhaps engage in a period of heart-searching. It then became clear to them that their motives were twisted. They were thinking of an unbroken family circle in Heaven. They were thinking of their daughter being spared the pains of Hell. They had never considered the glory of God. They then began to pray, "Father forgive us. Whatever you do to our daughter, whether you save her or not, do it, not for our sakes, but for yours, yet, be merciful and save." By God's tender mercy she was converted not many days after that. That is no guarantee that it will happen to you or anybody else. It is, however, a lesson for us all. James says, "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss that you may consume it in your own lusts." If you have been praying for the wrong reasons, begin to pray for the right ones. Things will then look a lot better in your praying.

One practical piece of advice has served me well in the work of intercessory prayer. I was converted under the ministry of Victor Thomas, the most godly man I have ever known. One day when he and I were alone, he said, "Martin, whenever you can, pray aloud." This practical advice has helped me over the years. I soon overcame my fear of eavesdroppers.

The Psalmist himself said, "With my voice I cry aloud to the Lord." Hannah is said to have mumbled a heart-felt prayer which was inaudible. However, when John Welsh prayed, he did so audibly. That great intercessor and son-in-law to John Knox was undoubtedly more prayerful than even his godly father-in-law. One night his concerned wife went into the room where he was praying, fearing that he was getting cold, and all that she could hear was this great man pleading in broken sentences, "Lord will you not give me Scotland?" God did just that!

In Zechariah 8:20, we read, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I am going.' Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord." Here you have a sudden awareness of the incredible importance of intercessory prayer. With a fresh sense of urgency, the people began to invoke the mercy of God. Then Zechariah continues: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from every language of the nation shall grasp the sleeve of the Jewish man saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

Oh, that God would repeat those mercies again! Can you imagine ten of your neighbors begging you to take them with you to church? Oh, that God would awaken us! He has given us His truth. But if the Word of God is ever to make a powerful inroad into the strongholds of evil and sin, all of us shall have to take seriously this matter of intercessory prayer.

I close with a quotation from a great American preacher, Gardiner Spring: "The time was when the pastors of the American churches valued the privilege of prayer; they were not only men of prayer, but they prayed often for and with one another. Their reciprocal and fraternal visits were consecrated and sweetened by prayer, nor was it any unusual thing for them to employ days of fasting and prayer together for the effusions of God's Spirit upon themselves and their churches, and they were days of power, days when God's arm was made bare and His right hand plucked out of His bosom, nor was it difficult to see then wherein the great strength of the pulpit lies. He that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the House of David shall be as God."

God be with us and God awaken us, and God make us intercessors for His glory, for His honor, for the well-being of His Church and for the rescuing of the nations. Soli Deo Gloria. Amen.



News

Mission 150 Needs Your Support

Mission 150-the planned effort to prepare and mail a special issue of the *Founders Journal* to every Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1994-95-is gaining support. 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 \$21,000 has been contributed to this effort. The projected cost for Mission 150 is \$50-60,000. It is hoped that more churches and individuals will agree that this effort is worthy of prayerful and financial support. One excellent way for this to be done is for Pastors to explain the potential of this project to their congregations and to encourage them to pray diligently for it. Also, several churches have already taken up special offerings for Mission 150, and others have pledged to do so. Some churches are sponsoring particular associations or whole state conventions (It is estimated that \$1.25 will cover the production cost and distribution of one of these special journals to one Pastor.). Inquiries regarding this effort are encouraged and should be directed to the editor at the *Founders Journal* address.

Al Mohler Elected President of Southern Seminary

Dr. Al Mohler, editor of the *Christian Index*, news journal of Georgia Baptists, was elected as the new President of Southern Seminary by a 46-5 vote of the trustees. Trustee Chairman, Wayne Allen, cited Mohler's unabashed commitment to the Abstract of Principles-the seminary's statement of faith-as the reason for the five votes against him. Dr. Mohler is quoted as declaring, "The Abstract is where we stand, and I intend to stand there substantively."



Book Review

A Treatise Concerning Scandal by James Durham; reprint 1990, 380 pp. Naphtali Press.

Reviewed by [Tom Ascol](#)

"Offenses must come" (Matthew 18:7). When Jesus made this statement He was noting a tragic, yet inevitable, consequence of the Fall of man. It does not take much experience in the Christian life to have these words of our Lord personally confirmed. Offense, controversy, and division undeniably attend the believer's pathway. Though the problems which such struggles create can be great, they pale in comparison to the resultant problems which often derive from trying to deal with offenses. Frequently the cure is worse than the disease.

This tendency makes *Concerning Scandal* a welcome aid to modern pastoral ministry. James Durham (1622-58) was one of the bright lights in an era of Scottish history that was marked by unusually gifted churchmen. Having witnessed grievous division within his beloved Church of Scotland (occasioned by militaristic and political events), he spent his dying days dictating this treatise (thus it is sub-titled, *The Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland*).

Part One treats scandals in general. Here Durham distinguishes between various types of offense and offers warning about how they are given and taken. Part Two addresses public scandals, and is especially helpful in determining when offenses should be made public in the course of church discipline--a valuable section for pastors.

Doctrinal scandals are the subject of Part Three. Durham reminds us that maintaining sound doctrine is of extreme importance to the Lord of the Church. Once again, the author labors to make fine distinctions (which are biblically required) between various cases. This is necessary because the nature of the case determines the nature of the response called for (whether it is excommunication, admonition and warning, or simply further doctrinal instruction).

The final part of the book takes up the question of scandalous divisions in the church. The origins, evil, and avoidance of schism are examined along with the necessary ingredients for true gospel unity.

Durham reminds us that those offenses which "must come" should not (indeed, must not) be ignored. But neither should they all be dealt with in a uniform manner. Above all, problems must be addressed in love and humility with a very high premium being placed on Christian unity.

This book is not light reading and sometimes the details of the arguments are hard to follow. The value is well worth the effort, however. In a day when church discipline is largely lost, and churches seem ready to split over the most insignificant matters, Durham's work is to be welcomed as a much needed corrective.



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