

# SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGY IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY



## SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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## *Southern Baptist Theology And a Parting Reflection*

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The Southern Baptist Convention at the end of the twentieth century was characterized by growth in mission and excitement over theology. The growth in mission was represented in the evangelistic aspirations expressed in the Bold Mission Thrust adopted by the convention. The excitement over theology was recapitulated in the report of the Peace Committee led by Charles G. Fuller and adopted by the convention. This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* focuses on that second aspect of Southern Baptist life in the latter half of the twentieth century, our theology. This journal is an appropriate venue for rehearsing Southern Baptist theology in the late twentieth century, because Southwestern Seminary often took center stage in that doctrinal drama. (This editorial is also an appropriate venue for some final words from this editor, of which more below.)

David S. Dockery introduces the issue through outlining the historical context of the Southern Baptist Convention as it entered and processed through the twentieth century. During this century of growth, the convention truly had its “coming of age,” bureaucratically as well as theologically. Next, James Leo Garrett Jr. contributes two essays on Herschel Harold Hobbs, a genuine Southern Baptist “Father” whose Biblicist production and steady leadership in the 1960s and 1970s cannot be overlooked. Next, Paige Patterson offers three essays detailing his perspective on the conservative renaissance of the Southern Baptist Convention, a movement that dominated denominational ideas and events throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The issue ends with a collection of critical book reviews written by faculty and graduate students from Southwestern Seminary and other theological institutions around the world.

This issue also draws to a close my ministry as editor for this journal. When originally tasking me, President Paige Patterson required three major implementations: 1) the speedy recovery of three years of prior issues previously neglected, 2) the restoration of a thematic approach to the journal issues, and 3) the creation of a new design that would appeal to pastors as well as scholars. Nine publications from volume 48.2 through 52.2 were dedicated to recovering the serial integrity of our journal with themes ranging from “British Baptists” to “The Family” and “Missiology” to “Biblical Inves-

tigations.” The redesigned journal issues began with 53.1 on the “Dead Sea Scrolls” and have featured, alongside the quality academic material, sermonic contributions, attractive cover art, and a monographic touch. During that time, we have seen the subscriptions of the journal recover dramatically and continue growing. Amidst this vivid recovery, we thank God for the ministry of Madison Grace, Editorial Assistant for this journal, who has also been my coworker in, *inter alia*, the theological studies division, the Center for Theological Research, BaptistTheology.org, and the Oxford Studies Program.

While each issue has been personally important to this editor, this particular one prompts a flood of warm memories. First, the three contributors, as Southwesterners, have played important roles in my own theological development. James Leo Garrett Jr. is a longtime theological mentor, having guided me into a career in systematic and historical theology with his characteristic Southern gentleman’s demeanor. Garrett’s personal and academic gravity and grace are unrivalled by any living Southern Baptist, as so many colleagues will attest. Paige Patterson was a theological teacher and political counselor long before and after he became my seminary’s president. It has been a distinct pleasure to work close beside him these nine years in things biblical, evangelistic, Baptist, and Anabaptist. David Dockery, also a Southwesterner, has been a personal and professional confidant for more than two decades. Dockery’s voluminous writings have covered the gamut of theology, culture, and education, and his burgeoning legacy as an institutional and denominational powerhouse is, Lord willing, incomplete.

A second reason for warm memories concerns the subjects of this issue. Many of the theologians and leaders mentioned herein have provided personal inspiration over the years. The first time I heard Herschel Hobbs preach, our church saw three people converted to Christ, including a senior citizen leaning on his cane and a young man provocatively decorated with an earring. Hobbs had the ability in the same sermon to speak to the budding Christian theologian and all manner of lost human beings, for he was passionate to speak God’s Word clearly. As for the convention sermons of such luminaries as W.A. Criswell and Jerry Vines, mentioned in Dr. Patterson’s conservative memoir, the written word cannot properly convey how powerful their spoken words really were in challenging one generation while forming the next.

A third reason for pleasant thoughts will be found amidst the book reviews. If the late twentieth century was the coming of age of the Southern Baptist Convention, the twenty-first century will be the coming of age of her intellectuals. Read the book reviews carefully, for some are faculty members at Southwestern, and the theological and practical expertise of these gospel ministers are unsurpassed anywhere. Other reviewers are today’s doctoral students who will be tomorrow’s teachers. Their biblical worldviews suffuse their scholarly approaches to biblical studies, theology and history, philosophy and ethics, missions and evangelism, and preaching and pastoral studies. It is in the hands of God to choose the next generation of Southern Baptist

leaders, but I pray he chooses the likes of Madison Grace, Matt Ward, Benjamin Hawkins, Ched Spellman, and John Mann to stand beside the likes of David Allen, Jason Lee, Matt Queen, and James Wicker to further the biblical legacies of Herschel Hobbs, W.A. Criswell, James Leo Garrett Jr., and Paige Patterson.

## *Southern Baptist Theology in the Twentieth Century: A Denomination Coming of Age*

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Prior to the beginning of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 and the establishment of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1859, John L. Dagg (1794–1884), president and professor of theology at Mercer (1844–54), was considered the most prominent theologian among Southern Baptists. Dagg both led the way for Southern Baptists and mirrored them in almost all areas of theology. The first hundred years of Southern Baptist life were largely shaped by a handful of major leaders, scholars, and theologians. Chief among these were J.P. Boyce (1827–88), Basil Manly Jr. (1825–92), B.H. Carroll (1843–1914), E.Y. Mullins (1860–1928), and W.T. Conner (1877–1952).

Two historic changes were initiated in the 1950s in Southern Baptist life in the post-Mullins/Conner era. The first of these was the open practice of historical-critical studies in the curriculum of Baptist colleges and seminaries. Such practices had been introduced in Baptist life by C.H. Toy at Southern Seminary in the nineteenth century and by W.L. Poteat at Wake Forest in the 1920s, but now this approach to reading the Bible was becoming more widespread.

The other more wide-ranging shift in SBC life was the movement toward a program-oriented approach to ministry. While the first development affected the institutions, the second influenced the churches, state conventions, and the mission boards, resulting in a movement toward a programmatic and pragmatic consensus, bringing about denominational trajectories with less theological consensus than that found during the Mullins/Conner era (1899–1952).

When the controversies over the nature of Scripture entered the public arena in 1961, 1969, and 1979, the theological understanding necessary to examine and evaluate such issues did not seem to be readily present among denominational leaders, pastors, or laypersons. The programmatic and pragmatic emphases of the 1950s provides at least one way of understanding how the denominational paradigm shifted in the SBC from the early 1950s to the late 1970s.



Theology in the post-Mullins/Conner era introduced an innovative and changing time in a denomination coming of age. During this period southern society began to take on a new shape. After World War II the New South started to emerge from its previous isolation. The agricultural economy and culture of the Old South gave way to urban and suburban structures. Populations grew and became more pluralistic, employment trends destabilized, and racial tension soared. The community patterns and expectations of the Old South were being visibly disturbed.

Southern Baptists, who at the time were located almost entirely in the deep South states, struggled to deal with these theological, cultural, and social challenges. New tensions were created; new questions were raised in this context. Southern Baptist academic life in the middle of the twentieth century wrestled with these challenging issues, particularly focused on the rise of biblical criticism. The practitioners of this new art sought to combine a belief in biblical inspiration with biblical criticism as publicly evidenced in the debates surrounding the publication of the *Message of Genesis* (1961) by Ralph Elliott, as well as the first volume of the *Broadman Bible Commentary* (1969). Both of these works openly questioned the historical reliability of the Bible and the orthodox belief related to the miracles of God.

The Southern Baptist Convention thus entered the middle years of the twentieth century divided between the progressivism that characterized the moderate leadership in denominational agencies and institutions and the popular traditionalism in most pews and pulpits. As most major denominational leadership posts were claimed by the more moderate wing of the convention, the traditionalists, in general, became more focused on their local churches and less connected to the denomination at large.

Southern Baptist leaders at this time demonstrated an openness to dialogue and interaction with other denominations and traditions, while evidencing a renewed concern for social responsibility. The most progressive wing of the SBC introduced contemporary, existential, and reader-oriented hermeneutics onto the Baptist scene. Emphasizing the ecumenical nature of the church, the moderates coalesced around the theme that “Baptist means freedom.”

Many of these struggles in particular dealt not only with matters of ecumenism and hermeneutics, but with the place of Darwinism in the theological arena. Both Dale Moody (1915–91) and Eric Rust (1910–91) pioneered new explorations in the area of the relationship between theology and science. Together with others, such as Frank Stagg (1911–2011), a new theological paradigm was being forged.

Even with all of these changes and initiatives, and the ones we have listed are only intended to be examples of several others that could be included, the more traditional theological convictions held sway in numerous pulpits across the Convention. Chief among these traditionalists were W.A. Criswell (1909–2002), the legendary pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, and Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–95), the most important denominational leader of

his day and pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Even as Criswell and Hobbs, longtime friends since their days together at Southern Seminary in the 1930s, shared common commitments to biblical inspiration, the two giants often viewed the SBC through different lenses.

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is devoted to an exploration of Southern Baptist theology in the second half of the twentieth century. Two significant individuals, whose voices provided shaping influences in various spheres of the SBC during this time, will explore these developments for us through a series of articles. James Leo Garrett Jr., whose teaching career influenced students for six decades at Southern Seminary, Baylor University, and Southwestern Seminary, evaluates the contributions of Hobbs. Paige Patterson, who has served as president of Criswell College, Southeastern Seminary, and Southwestern Seminary, describes the movements that shaped the SBC during the final three decades of the twentieth century. Few people have had the vantage points to observe and interpret these theological developments like Drs. Garrett and Patterson. Their own contributions have been extraordinary and are worthy of being the subjects of such explorations as those found in this issue of the journal.

It is not possible to understand the issues and challenges we face in Southern Baptist life in the second decade of the twenty-first century without understanding what took place in the SBC from the time of the adoption of the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* to the 2000 Orlando Convention where the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* was overwhelmingly affirmed. The differences in the articles on Holy Scripture, including the wording related to the Christological guide to interpreting the Bible, provide the window for understanding the theological developments in Baptist life at the end of the twentieth century. The influences of the mainline denominations on one wing of the SBC and the impact of northern evangelicalism on the other wing also provide windows for understanding this period. Dr. Garrett's articles provide insight regarding the 1963 Statement, while Dr. Patterson's contributions help us understand how the changes took place as the SBC moved toward the twenty-first century.

I am grateful for the privilege to provide this little introductory essay and am privileged to commend to you the contributions that follow from the pens of James Leo Garrett Jr. and Paige Patterson. Learning about our past will not only provide knowledge of what has gone before us, but hopefully will give us understanding and wisdom for the challenges of our day and the days to come.

***Herschel Harold Hobbs:  
Pastoral and Denominational  
Expositor-Theologian<sup>1</sup>***

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Herschel Hobbs has been identified as a “thoroughgoing biblicist,” first by Mark Coppenger,<sup>2</sup> then by David S. Dockery;<sup>3</sup> as a “progressive conservative” by Dockery;<sup>4</sup> and as a “populist theologian” by Jerry L. Faught.<sup>5</sup> Both *Baptist Theologians*<sup>6</sup> and *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*<sup>7</sup> have chapters devoted to the theology of Hobbs, and the present speaker (author) has treated Hobbs’s theology as that of one of the two most influential Southern Baptist pastor-theologians of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Most of Hobbs’s early books were expositions of the New Testament or books of sermons growing out of his preaching-pastoral ministry in Oklahoma City. Although his books published by Baker, Zondervan, Word, and Harper and Row undoubtedly were read by numerous non-Baptist pastors, Hobbs wrote primarily for the Southern Baptist context. Hence, this author proposes to consider Hobbs as a pastoral and denominational expositor-theologian.

<sup>1</sup>Presented at “The Gaskin Lectures” on the “Thought and Work of Herschel Harold Hobbs,” 3 October 2011, Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 440.

<sup>3</sup>David S. Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 230.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Hobbs applied these words to himself. “The Inerrancy Controversy,” in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, vol. 1, ed. Dick Allen Rader (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1995), 124.

<sup>5</sup>Jerry L. Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs: An Exposition of the Southern Baptist Roots via Media,” Gaskin Lecture no. 1, Oklahoma Baptist University, 2000, typescript copy, 1.

<sup>6</sup>Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 434–49.

<sup>7</sup>Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 216–32.

<sup>8</sup>James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 468–73; cf. 481–86.

## I

An examination of Hobbs's writings and of his Southern Baptist context leads to the identification of certain basic characteristics of his work as expositor-theologian. This author would identify four. First, Hobbs was a bridge-building theologian who sought to connect the Baptist grassroots with academia, and academia with the Baptist grassroots. In his 1962 Southern Baptist Convention presidential address, Hobbs called Southern Baptists "a 'grass-roots' people," whose "success is due largely to the response given by the 'grass roots' to the Gospel as Southern Baptists preach it."<sup>9</sup> Methodologically, the bridge-building role was probably best demonstrated in his mediatorial role between Ralph H. Elliott (1925– ) and the trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and in his leadership role as chairman of the 1962–63 SBC Baptist Faith and Message Committee. By his own testimony, Hobbs recalled that he attempted to persuade Elliott that, for a "bridge" to be built over "the chasm," "it must rest on both banks," and "hence you must give us something to rest it on your side."<sup>10</sup> Of course, that bridge was not fully constructed. Additionally, Hobbs's participation in the original proposal that SBC seminary presidents be included in the membership of the 1962–63 Baptist Faith and Message Committee—a proposal rejected by the SBC<sup>11</sup>—can be seen as an expression of his respect for seminary leadership. But a more tangible indication of that can be seen in the fact that the committee consulted with, and sought input from, professors in the six SBC seminaries and from the editorial personnel of the Sunday School Board (SSB).<sup>12</sup> Hobbs's respect, however, for Southern Baptist seminary and university professors was not an unlimited trajectory. "Hobbs lamented that Baptist seminary students in the 1960's and 1970's knew more about German theologians than they knew about [E.Y.] Mullins (1860–1928) and [W.T.] Conner (1877–1952)."<sup>13</sup> Coppenger's comment that Hobbs "took the

<sup>9</sup>"Crisis and Conquest" (Presidential Address), SBC, *Annual* (1962), 89; Herschel H. Hobbs, *My Faith and Message: An Autobiography* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 231.

<sup>10</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs to James Leo Garrett Jr., 30 May 1989, Hobbs Folder, Archives, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; also Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, ed. Rader, 212.

<sup>11</sup>Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 208; Herschel H. Hobbs, "The Baptist Faith and Message—Anchored but Free," *Baptist History and Heritage* 13.3 (July 1978): 34; idem, "The Baptist Faith and Message," in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, ed. Rader, 68–69.

<sup>12</sup>Almer J. Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 4–5, 116–34. Additionally, the Mercer University faculty was involved in the consultative process. Ibid., 123–24, 131–34. Also Hobbs, "Baptist Faith and Message—Anchored but Free," 37; idem, "The Baptist Faith and Message," 71–72.

<sup>13</sup>David S. Dockery, "The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7.1 (Spring 2003): 78n78. See also Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 250.

theology of the ‘giants’ and made it accessible to people in the pews”<sup>14</sup> must be coupled with the fact that in his books Hobbs was more prone to cite, quote, or list in his bibliography the writings of biblical commentators and the published sermons of pastors than the writings of systematic theologians, with the exception of Mullins.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, one can argue that Hobbs’s less-than-successful role as “mediator” on the SBC Peace Committee (1985–88) made evident the limits of his bridge-building.<sup>16</sup>

Second, Hobbs took the mantle of and can be identified as a “middle-of-the road” conservative expositor-theologian. “Middle of the road” for Hobbs did not mean equidistant between liberalism and conservatism but in the middle of conservatism. In his 1962 SBC presidential address, he declared that, despite detours, Southern Baptists had been “a middle of the road people.”<sup>17</sup> In his 1993 autobiography, he wrote: “When I was president of the [Southern Baptist] Convention, I estimated that 90 percent were in the middle of the road, with 10 percent equally divided to the right or left of center.”<sup>18</sup> Faught has recently emphasized this middle-of-the-road character of Hobbs’s theology.<sup>19</sup> In 1990, Nancy Tatom Ammerman identified five Southern Baptist sub-groups: “self-identified fundamentalists” (11%), “fundamentalist conservatives” (22%), “conservatives” (50%), “moderate conservatives” (8%), and “self-identified moderates” (9%). The second and third groups would constitute 72%.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in 1993, Richard D. Land identified theologically and politically five groups in the SBC: fundamentalists, course-correction conservatives, theological conservatives who are political moderates, true moderates, and true liberals, with groups two and three combined constituting about 75 percent of those voting at national conventions.<sup>21</sup> Hobbs was confident that the middle represented the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists and that he represented that middle. His middle-of-the-road stance, however, has not always been acknowledged by others, especially since his death in 1995. Neo-Calvinists have found him to be too Arminian.<sup>22</sup> Dispensationalists and historical premillennialists object to his amillennialism.<sup>23</sup> Inerrantists have found him to be less than consistent

<sup>14</sup>Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 437.

<sup>15</sup>Hobbs did not, for example, cite or quote from other Southern Baptist theologians such as John Leadley Dagg, James Petigru Boyce, or W.T. Conner, or from leading contemporary Protestant theologians.

<sup>16</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 254–67.

<sup>17</sup>Hobbs, “Crisis and Conquest,” 86.

<sup>18</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 251–52.

<sup>19</sup>Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs,” 1, 8, 15.

<sup>20</sup>Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 73–80.

<sup>21</sup>Richard D. Land, “The Southern Baptist Convention, 1979–1993: What Happened and Why?” *Baptist History and Heritage* 28.4 (October 1993): 10–11.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas J. Nettles, “The Rise & Demise of Calvinism among Southern Baptists,” *Founders Journal* 19/20 (Winter/Spring 1995): 19–20; Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 444–45.

<sup>23</sup>Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” 445.

in applying inerrancy.<sup>24</sup> Confessionalists reckon his anti-creedalism as being less than adequate.<sup>25</sup>

Third, Hobbs was an exegetical theologian following the lexical-grammatical-historical hermeneutic, with its focus on the Greek New Testament, practiced by Archibald Thomas Robertson (1863–1934) and William Hersey Davis (1887–1950) at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1890 to 1945. Hobbs was a student in Robertson’s class the day in 1934 that Robertson had his fatal stroke, and Davis was Hobbs’s doctoral mentor. This hermeneutical tradition had been inaugurated by Robertson’s father-in-law, John Albert Broadus (1827–1895), one of the four founding professors of Southern Seminary.<sup>26</sup> This method emphasized word meanings, grammar, syntax, historical background, and comparable biblical texts.<sup>27</sup> Fought has offered a threefold critique of Hobbs’s use of this method: (1) it put too much stress on etymology to the neglect of “context, style, [and] genre”; (2) it “at times” imposed “a modern world-view upon ancient texts”; and (3) it resulted in a harmonization of difficult biblical texts according to Hobbs’s own “particular system of thought.”<sup>28</sup> But important is the fact that, whereas for Broadus, Robertson, and Davis, this hermeneutic had not led to coordinated biblical theology or to systematic theology,<sup>29</sup> it was by Hobbs supplemented to the extent that he undertook systematic writings.<sup>30</sup> For Hobbs, all good theology must be based on adequate biblical exegesis, but the properly interpreted texts pertaining to a subject must be brought together as biblical theology seeks to do.

Fourth, Hobbs was theologically shaped by and committed to the theology of Edgar Young Mullins, the fourth president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the leading Southern Baptist theologian during

<sup>24</sup>Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 223, 388–89n30.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 221–22; Dockery, “Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995),” 66; James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2007), 3.

<sup>26</sup>Dockery, “Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995),” 63; idem, “Mighty in the Scriptures: John A. Broadus and His Influence on A.T. Robertson and Southern Baptist Life,” in *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, ed. David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 21–22, 42–44; James Patterson, “Broadus’s Living Legacy,” in *John A. Broadus*, ed. Dockery and Duke, 242–44; William A. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville: Broadman, 1959), 74.

<sup>27</sup>William B. Tolar, “The Grammatical-Historical Method,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 217–34.

<sup>28</sup>Fought, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs,” 15.

<sup>29</sup>Edgar V. McKnight, “A.T. Robertson’s Contribution to the New Testament” (Th.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 372; David S. Dockery, “The Broadus-Robertson Tradition,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. George and Dockery, 111.

<sup>30</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman, 1960); idem, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964); idem, *The Holy Spirit: Believer’s Guide* (Nashville: Broadman, 1967); idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1971); idem (with E.Y. Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978); idem, *You Are Chosen: The Priesthood of All Believers* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

the first one-third of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Mullins was not Hobbs's teacher in the classroom, for Mullins died in 1928, and Hobbs entered Southern Seminary in 1932.<sup>32</sup> Hobbs, however, acknowledged his dependence on and agreement with Mullins. "I have lived with his books to the point that I feel that I did know him."<sup>33</sup> Mullins's *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*<sup>34</sup> was Hobbs's textbook in systematic theology at Southern Seminary, and he memorized its subsections for examinations.<sup>35</sup> As a Southern Baptist theologian, Hobbs placed Walter Thomas Conner second to Mullins,<sup>36</sup> but Hobbs did not cite the writings of Conner or the writings of earlier Baptist theologians, such as John Leadley Dagg (1796–1884), James Petigru Boyce (1827–1888), or Augustus Hopkins Strong (1836–1921). The influence of Mullins on Hobbs was especially manifested in his appropriation of Mullins's idea of soul competency, which was Mullins's concept for identifying "the historical significance" of the Baptists.<sup>37</sup> For Mullins soul competency was an alternative to Landmark successionism<sup>38</sup> and a countervailing to the Roman Catholic incompetency of the soul, shared to an extent by pedobaptist Protestantism.<sup>39</sup>

## II

How were these four characteristics so identified actually manifested in the expository and theological writings and the actions of Herschel Hobbs?

First is the bridge-building posture. The 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, whose committee Hobbs chaired, following the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message, declared that the Bible has "truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter,"<sup>40</sup> while concurrently the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's trustees, with whom Hobbs worked closely as SBC president

<sup>31</sup>For writings about the life and work of Mullins, see Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 416n2.

<sup>32</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 61, 74, 63.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 61. The dedication to Hobbs's revision of Mullins's *Axioms of Religion*, 5, reads as follows: "Dedicated to Edgar Young Mullins whom I never knew personally but who through his books has been my teacher through the years."

<sup>34</sup>E.Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1917).

<sup>35</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 74. A major influence of this book by Mullins was in respect to Christian experience.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>E.Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion* (Philadelphia: Griffith & Rowland, 1908), 44, 53; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 7–10.

<sup>38</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, "In Search of Our Identity," in James Leo Garrett Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 133–38.

<sup>39</sup>Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 59–65. Louisville was still a predominantly Roman Catholic city when Mullins first enunciated soul competency and the axioms before the Baptist World Alliance in 1905.

<sup>40</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1963), 270; William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969), 393; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 11.

during the Elliott Controversy, was affirming that the historical-critical method was an acceptable biblical hermeneutic when properly utilized.<sup>41</sup> As chairman of that same committee, the Oklahoma pastor worked closely with the members of the committee, all of whom were members by virtue of having been elected president of a Baptist state convention and the great majority of whom were pastors, while at the same time leading the committee to seek the counsel and input of professors in the six SBC seminaries and the editorial staff of the SBC's Sunday School Board.<sup>42</sup> As a nonaligned member of the SBC Peace Committee during the Inerrancy Controversy, Hobbs was unsuccessful in building a bridge between conservatives and moderates through the implementation of the committee's report.<sup>43</sup> In a different vein, in dealing with Genesis and creation, Hobbs would seem to be building bridges toward the scientific community when he acknowledged that the universe could be "billions of years old," suggested that the pre-Abrahamic era could be reckoned not in "years but vast uncharted periods of time," and conceded that the "six days" of creation may have been "indefinite periods of time, perhaps of varying lengths."<sup>44</sup>

Second, how did Hobbs's middle-of-the-road posture manifest itself? With respect to theories of the mode of biblical inspiration, he did not decisively commit himself to one theory. In the late nineteenth century, Southern Baptist Basil Manly Jr. had clearly advocated the plenary theory,<sup>45</sup> whereas liberal Baptist William Newton Clarke had embraced the illumination theory, whereby primarily biblical writers, not biblical writings, were inspired in a manner not "radically different" from that by which the Holy Spirit inspired all Christians.<sup>46</sup> Between these positions was the stance of Mullins<sup>47</sup> and of Conner,<sup>48</sup> namely, that commitment to a single theory was

<sup>41</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1963), 68; Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 460–61, based on Salvador T. Martinez, "Southern Baptist Views of the Scriptures in Light of the Elliott Controversy" (Th.M. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966), 36–37, 41–42; Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," 210–13. Ralph H. Elliott, *The "Genesis" Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 43, 53, 98, 103, 105, 107–08, 116–17, has never acknowledged any bridge-building efforts by Hobbs and, amid considerable lack of bitterness, has most always interpreted Hobbs's role in the controversy in negative terms.

<sup>42</sup>Hobbs, "The Baptist Faith and Message," 69–70, 71–72; idem, *My Faith and Message*, 242–43; Smith, *The Making of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, 116–34.

<sup>43</sup>Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 375; Hobbs, "The Inerrancy Controversy," 125–36.

<sup>44</sup>Hobbs, *The Origin of All Things: Studies in Genesis* (Waco, TX: Word, 1975), 12, 11, 19.

<sup>45</sup>Basil Manly Jr., *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration Explained and Vindicated* (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1888), 59–60; (reprint: Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1985), 53.

<sup>46</sup>William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 40, 42.

<sup>47</sup>Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression*, 142–44.

<sup>48</sup>W.T. Conner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 108–10; idem, *Revelation and God: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1936), 84.



unnecessary. Hobbs essentially adopted this via media. Although in 1971, acknowledging that most Southern Baptists held either to the “dictation” theory or the “dynamic” theory,<sup>49</sup> Hobbs tilted toward the dynamic theory, in a posthumously published essay (1997), he committed neither to the plenary nor the dynamic theory.<sup>50</sup>

Hobbs’s middle-of-the-road stance can again be seen in his careful balance of the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ. Although this position was essentially Chalcedonian, Hobbs would insist that he derived it from his New Testament studies.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the Oklahoma pastor found a via media regarding the Holy Spirit. Those of the creedal and sacramental traditions had magnified the person of the Spirit vis-à-vis the Trinity to the neglect of the work of the Spirit.<sup>52</sup> Twentieth-century Pentecostal and Charismatic movements were magnifying the gifts of the Spirit, claiming that all the gifts mentioned in the New Testament are still given and exercised today.<sup>53</sup> Hobbs stressed the multifaceted work of the Holy Spirit,<sup>54</sup> but, by adopting a cessationist view, concluded that the extraordinary gifts (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, and prophecy) have been limited to the apostolic era.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, although no confirming statistical studies exist, it can be assumed that Hobbs’s one-point Dortian Calvinist posture (perseverance) and four-point Arminian posture (the other four disputed issues) were in agreement with the views of the great majority of Southern Baptist pastors during Hobbs’s active ministry.<sup>56</sup> Here again, Hobbs was in the middle. Hobbs’s amillennialism, to which he shifted after an earlier and somewhat undefined premillennialism, was framed after the nineteenth-century hegemony of an optimistic postmillennialism among Baptists in America and just as historical premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism were rising to ascendancy among Southern Baptists.<sup>57</sup> Based on an interpretation of the message of the book of Revelation in which God “signified” (1:1, HCSB) it to John so that the term “sign” is taken as the book’s key word and so that the book is to have a symbolic rather than literal interpretation, Hobbs then

<sup>49</sup>Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 21–22.

<sup>50</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, “People of the Book: The Baptist Doctrine of the Holy Scripture,” in *Baptist Why and Why Not Revisited*, ed. Timothy George and Richard D. Land (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 15–16; see also Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 222–23.

<sup>51</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 38–50; idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 31–39; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 39–41; idem, *A Layman’s Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 90–92.

<sup>52</sup>James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2001), 147–53, 184, 207–08.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 180–84, 224.

<sup>54</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 55–63; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 45–47.

<sup>55</sup>Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe*, 51–57.

<sup>56</sup>Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 226–27; Hobbs to James Leo Garrett Jr., 24 August 1989, Hobbs Folder, Archives, Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>57</sup>Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” 229.

interpreted the “thousand years” of Revelation 20:2–7 nonliterally as “reaching from Jesus’ resurrection or ascension to his second coming.”<sup>58</sup> Thus Hobbs joined certain Southern Baptist professors<sup>59</sup> and his own church member<sup>60</sup> in the advocacy of amillennialism. In summary, on biblical inspiration, the two natures of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Calvinist-Arminian issues, and the millennium, Hobbs demonstrated a middle-of-the-road stance.

Third, how did Hobbs apply his lexical-grammatical-historical hermeneutic in biblical interpretation? With the exception of *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, his earliest (i.e., pre-1962) books were either expositions of New Testament books or books of sermons. Hobbs was committed to begin with biblical exposition as the foundation and also to avoid theological speculation devoid of such a foundation. He often cited biblical texts in support of theological affirmations. Except for Faught’s previously noted critique of the Hobbs hermeneutic, this field is ripe for additional research. Two particular instances in Hobbs’s biblical interpretation may be examined as to consistency with the Robertson-Davis tradition. One is Hobbs’s unconventional interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>61</sup> Rather than connect Hebrews 6:1–6 with the theological issue of perseverance versus apostasy, Hobbs read Hebrews as a warning against “arrested Christian growth” and as a call to bold participation in “God’s world-mission of redemption” with warnings as to lost “opportunity” and “the consequences of failure.”<sup>62</sup> This, he contended, made the epistle especially relevant to the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> But one may ask whether the imperatives of modern missiology, more than the lexical-grammatical-historical method, may have led Hobbs to his interpretation. Another case study involves Hobbs’s doctrine of election. As early as 1960, the Oklahoma pastor explicated the doctrine that God chose not individuals unto salvation but rather a “plan” of salvation wherein God foreknew who among humankind would freely choose to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup> Although Hobbs did not clearly specify such, this view means that

<sup>58</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Cosmic Drama: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Waco, TX: Word, 1971), 24–25, 181–90; idem, “Amillennialism,” in George R. Beasley-Murray, Herschel H. Hobbs, and Ray Frank Robbins, *Revelation: Three Viewpoints* (Nashville: Broadman, 1977), 76–77, 134–39.

<sup>59</sup>Edward A. McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Broadman, 1951); Ray Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman, 1951); Russell Bradley Jones, *What, Where, and When Is the Millennium?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975).

<sup>60</sup>Jesse Wilson Hodges, *Christ’s Kingdom and Coming: With an Analysis of Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

<sup>61</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, *Studies in Hebrews* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1954), 52–57; idem, *How to Follow Jesus: The Challenge of Hebrews for Christian Life and Witness Today* (Nashville: Broadman, 1971), 61, 141; republished under title: *Hebrews: Challenges to Bold Discipleship* (Nashville: Broadman, 1981), 56–62.

<sup>62</sup>Hobbs, *How to Follow Jesus*, 141, 61.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 141–42. According to Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs,” 10, Hobbs “made the book of Hebrews a Bold Mission Thrust manifesto.”

<sup>64</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 89–100. Hobbs joined this view of election with the concept of universal atonement. Ibid., 90–91. He interpreted *προορισθέντες* in Eph 1:11 to mean “to mark out the boundaries beforehand,” and then concluded: “He elected that all

election, though by grace, depends ultimately on the decisions of human beings. This is essentially an Arminian position. If word meanings are to be significant for interpretation, can ἐξελέξατο and προορίσας in Ephesians 1:4–5, which have Θεὸς as their subject, be rightfully understood to support election that is ultimately by human beings? Has Hobbs actually protected divine sovereignty as well as human freedom, which he indeed declared to be so necessary?<sup>65</sup>

Fourth, how did Hobbs specifically apply the theology of Mullins? Most obviously he did so with respect to soul competency. We do well to remember that Mullins had utilized soul competency as the key to “the historical significance” of the Baptists, not as the foundation for his systematic theology. Hobbs employed soul competency as the foundational principle of Baptists in explicating the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message<sup>66</sup> and, as expected, in his revision of Mullins’s *The Axioms of Religion*.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, he utilized it in his treatment of “the priesthood of the believer.”<sup>68</sup> As with Mullins, soul competency was not to be taken as human self-sufficiency and can be differentiated from soul freedom. But the claim that it is a New Testament principle<sup>69</sup> raises the question as to the difference between an inference and the fruit of exegesis. One may argue that soul competency is a possible inference from the biblical doctrine of the image of God in man but hardly that it is derivable by exegesis. This can lead to the probability that there was in Hobbs’s thought a major tension, if not a contradiction, between the exegetical characteristic and the Mullins characteristic,<sup>70</sup> which, along with the bridge-building and the middle-of-the-road characteristics, marked the thought of Herschel Harold Hobbs.

who are ‘in Christ’ shall be saved.” Idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 67. But this “election is to both salvation and evangelism.” Idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 107.

<sup>65</sup>Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, 92; idem, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 66; idem, *What Baptists Believe*, 106–07.

<sup>66</sup>Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 7–10.

<sup>67</sup>Hobbs (with Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion*, 47–53.

<sup>68</sup>Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 1–4.

<sup>69</sup>Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, 65; Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 8; Hobbs (with Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion*, 48; Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion*, ed. C. Douglas Weaver (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010), 64.

<sup>70</sup>Raymond Evans Carroll, “Dimensions of Individualism in Southern Baptist Thought” (Th.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995), 127–72, classified Hobbs and Frank Staggs as “existential individualists.”

*From Denominational Statesman  
to Rejected Leader; From Neglected Author  
to Recovered Author?*

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By any criterion—president, author, preacher, or pastor, Herschel H. Hobbs was one of the most influential leaders among Southern Baptists during the twentieth century. Recognition of that leadership has taken literary form.<sup>1</sup> Five years after Hobbs's death, James T. Draper Jr. declared that “there is no one today in the SBC that compares with Herschel H. Hobbs.”<sup>2</sup> Even so, with the changing tides of denominational life, Hobbs in later life experienced rejection by fellow Southern Baptists that stood in contrast to the acceptance that he had received when he was at the pinnacle of his leadership.

I

The pinnacle was during his two-year presidency (1961–63) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Although his predecessor, Ramsey Pollard, had warned Southern Baptists of disturbing trends in their colleges, universities, or seminaries,<sup>3</sup> it is doubtful that Hobbs could have foreseen how critical his presidency would prove to be. The publication of Ralph H. Elliott's *The Message of Genesis*<sup>4</sup> and the controversy that it evoked and the

<sup>1</sup>Mark Coppenger, “Herschel Hobbs,” in *Baptist Theologians*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1990), 434–49; Jerry L. Faught, “The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs: An Exposition of the Southern Baptist Roots via Media,” Gaskin Lecture #1, Oklahoma Baptist University, 2000, typescript copy, 15 pages.; idem, “The Denominationalism of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995): Conservative Advocate for Organizational Unity,” Gaskin Lecture #2, Oklahoma Baptist University, 2000, typescript copy, 17 pages.; David S. Dockery, “Herschel H. Hobbs,” in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 216–32; idem, “The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995),” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7.1 (Spring 2003): 62–78; James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 468–73.

<sup>2</sup>Bill Sumners, interview with James T. Draper Jr., August 2000, as quoted by Faught, “The Denominationalism of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995),” 2.

<sup>3</sup>“President's Address,” SBC, *Annual* (1960), 80.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph H. Elliott, *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961).

work of the Hobbs-chaired Baptist Faith and Message Committee called forth great leadership skills from Hobbs. His parliamentary skills were exercised, for example, in his ruling that K. Owen White's 1962 motion should be divided into two motions.<sup>5</sup> His two presidential addresses, among the most substantive in the history of the SBC, projected Hobbs as a leader of thought among Southern Baptists.<sup>6</sup> In 1962, after rejecting theological liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and Bultmannianism as theological routes for Southern Baptists, he appealed for a middle-of-the-road, non-creedal conservatism, called for more teaching and training and the renewal of expository preaching, and asked for respectful trust of the denomination's seminary professors, who in turn must strive to produce adequate leaders for the churches and be accountable to the denomination.<sup>7</sup> In 1963, building on Acts 17:24–31, the Oklahoman developed a philosophy of history that interwove secular history and holy history and, facing the atomic age and the challenge of communism, called upon Southern Baptists to resolve racial problems at home and launch an unprecedented world mission advance.<sup>8</sup> As convention president Hobbs was involved in mediating efforts between Elliott and the trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, begun, it seems, at the request of President Millard J. Berquist and Malcolm B. Knight, chairman of trustees.<sup>9</sup> Hobbs's own impact on the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message may best be seen in its threefold soteriological pattern—regeneration, sanctification, and glorification, which was not common in the earlier Baptist confessional tradition<sup>10</sup> but was used in Hobbs's own writings, both before 1962<sup>11</sup> and after 1962.<sup>12</sup> Hobbs served on the boards of SBC agencies, as Baptist World Alliance officer, and on state convention assignments.<sup>13</sup> He was the regular

<sup>5</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1962), 65, 68; Herschel H. Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," in *The Fibers of Our Faith*, vol. 1, ed. Dick Allen Rader (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1995), 208; Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 208.

<sup>6</sup>By request of the messengers, both of Hobbs's addresses were published in the SBC *Annual*. In *The Sacred Desk: Sermons of the Southern Baptist Convention Presidents*, ed. Ergun Caner and Emir Fethi Caner (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 204–09, the editors, following the policy of including only one sermon by each president, included "Crisis and Conquest."

<sup>7</sup>"Crisis and Conquest" (Presidential Address), SBC, *Annual* (1962), 81–89.

<sup>8</sup>"God and History" (Presidential Address), SBC, *Annual* (1963), 86–95.

<sup>9</sup>Hobbs, "The Elliott Controversy," 206, 210.

<sup>10</sup>William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1959), 153–71, 241–95, 361–67, 391–98. Neither the First London Confession (1644), the Second London Confession (1677), the New Hampshire Confession (1833), nor the Baptist Faith and Message Statement (1925) utilized this threefold pattern.

<sup>11</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of Our Faith* (Nashville: Broadman, 1960), 101–12; idem, *New Testament Evangelism: The Eternal Purpose* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1960), 107–23.

<sup>12</sup>Herschel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman, 1964), 97–106.

<sup>13</sup>He served as the Louisiana member of the Foreign Mission Board (1942–45), the Alabama member of the board of Baptist Bible Institute (later New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) (1945–49), an Oklahoma member of the SBC Executive Committee (1951–63),

preacher on “The Baptist Hour” (radio) from October 1958 until September 1976,<sup>14</sup> and the Radio and Television Commission (SBC) published many of these in pamphlet form. From October–December 1968 to the posthumous October–December 1996 issue, the Oklahoma pastor authored four times each year *Studying Life and Work Lessons* and thus had a special teaching ministry among the adult Sunday School teachers in Southern Baptist churches.<sup>15</sup> His books, expository, sermonic, and doctrinal, provided a similar ministry to Southern Baptist pastors and those of other denominations. For years, Hobbs wrote for the Baptist state papers a column entitled “Baptist Beliefs.” Hobbs understood his role to be that of a unifier among Southern Baptists, holding forth “unity in diversity” with more stress on the unity than on the diversity but with a unity that was not conformity or uniformity.<sup>16</sup> Late in life, borrowing language from Albert McClellan, Hobbs affirmed: “I do not want to be known as a Conservative or a Moderate as those terms are now defined. I simply want to be known as ‘an old-time Southern Baptist.’”<sup>17</sup>

the Oklahoma member of the board of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1965–75), and a member of the SBC Peace Committee (1985–88). He was one of the vice presidents of the Baptist World Alliance (1965–70) and was defeated for the BWA presidency in 1970. He was president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (1957–58), moderator of the Oklahoma County Baptist Association (1955–56), and trustee and trustee chairman of Oklahoma Baptist University. Harold Bennett, “Foreword” to Hobbs, *My Faith and Message: An Autobiography* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), xv–xvi; Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 204; Faith Bowers, “New Structures for a Growing Family: The Baptist World Alliance in the 1970s,” in *Baptists Together in Christ, 1905–2005: A Hundred-Year History of the Baptist World Alliance*, ed. Richard V. Pierard (Birmingham: Samford University Press, 2005), 174–76; Bob Flournoy, “Laborers Together with God (1949–1963),” in *Lighthouse on the Corner: A History of the First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma*, ed. Phyllis Woodruff Sapp (Oklahoma City: Century Press, 1964), 109; Richard Cheek to James Leo Garrett, Jr. 15 September 2011.

<sup>14</sup>John Steven Gaines, “An Analysis of the Correlation between Representative Baptist Hour Sermons by Herschel H. Hobbs and Selected Articles of the Baptist Faith and Message” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), abstract, 2. Gaines studied the evangelistic sermons preached by Hobbs between 1962 and September 1976. Hobbs’s sermons were “centered on the Christ event. Rarely ever do any of these messages avoid mentioning at least one tenet of Christology.” *Ibid.*, 100–01.

<sup>15</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 219.

<sup>16</sup>Hobbs, “Crisis and Conquest,” 85; *idem*, *My Faith and Message*, 266; Hobbs, Interview by Dennis Ray Wiles, June 1990, in “Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Fundamentalism in the Southern Baptist Convention, 1979–1990” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992), 225. Gregory A. Wills, “Progressive Theology and Southern Baptist Controversies of the 1950s and 1960s,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7.1 (Spring 2003): 19, 27, has reached almost contradictory conclusions about Hobbs. On the one hand, relative to the 1958–59 crisis at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary he reports that for Hobbs “the seminary was due for some purifying” lest Southern Baptists “would repeat the mistakes of the mainline [Protestant] denominations.” On the other hand, Wills declares that during the 1960’s “with the aid of such denominational statesmen as Herschel Hobbs and Duke McCall, progressive theology flourished at the seminaries.”

<sup>17</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 254.

In less than a decade after the pinnacle of presidential leadership, Hobbs faced at the SBC podium raucous and hostile rejection by some of the messengers. Unlike the SBC session at Fort Worth in 1890 when the issue was the establishment of a Sunday School Board, with James M. Frost, B.H. Carroll, and J.B. Hawthorne supporting and J.B. Gambrell opposing and brotherly debate led to Gambrell's being named to the committee for the new board and his and Frost's jointly writing its report,<sup>18</sup> at the 1970 session in Denver brotherly debate was replaced by partisanly rude conduct. Hobbs was one of three who spoke against, while there were four who spoke for, Gwin T. Turner's motion that the SBC "request the Sunday School Board to withdraw Volume 1 [of the *Broadman Bible Commentary*] from further distribution and that it be rewritten with due consideration of the conservative viewpoint."<sup>19</sup> The *Baptist Standard* reported that Hobbs said that "the convention was not in a position to make a decision."<sup>20</sup> But Hobbs recalled that he "noted that [G. Henton] Davies [had] discussed several views of Abraham's offering of Isaac before stating his own opinion" but that with one minute remaining, in which he wished to argue that Turner's motion was contrary to the SBC Constitution, numerous messengers "hooted and hollered that Hobbs was speaking beyond his three minute time limit," and Hobbs left the podium.<sup>21</sup> Turner's motion was adopted by a vote of 5,394 to 2,170.<sup>22</sup> At Denver, Hobbs was, on the other hand, successful in opposing Jerry Don Abernathy's motion to insert a new sentence on the inspiration, authenticity, and authority of the Bible into the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. Hobbs argued, according to the *Baptist Messenger*, that the addition was "unnecessary."<sup>23</sup> At the session's close, the Oklahoman appealed to the messengers to consider the decisions of the body as "our decisions" and to "maintain and magnify our unity under the lordship of Christ."<sup>24</sup>

In the 1979 SBC session at Houston, Hobbs spoke in support of Wayne Dehoney's motion that the "Convention reaffirm the 1963 Baptist Faith and

<sup>18</sup>Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 97–99.

<sup>19</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1970), 76, 63.

<sup>20</sup>Don McGregor, "Volume Withdrawn; Agency Uncensored," *Baptist Standard*, 10 June 1970, 3.

<sup>21</sup>Faught, "The Denominationalism of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," 13–14, based on Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 220–21. According to a Baptist Press story, "editorial reactions to the SBC in Denver prompted at least 17 Baptist state papers . . . to question editorially the 'unChristian,' 'bitter,' 'hostile,' 'vitriolic,' 'arrogant,' 'unforgiving,' and 'militant' spirit and attitude the editors said some convention messengers exhibited." "Editorials Rap 'Hostile' Denver Spirit," *The Alabama Baptist*, 25 June 1970, 1.

<sup>22</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1970), 77–78.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 74, 78, 81–82; Abernathy's motion failed by 2,920 to 3,936. "Bible Commentary Rejected," *Baptist Messenger*, 11 June 1970, 4. According to James T. Draper Jr. (with John Perry), *LifeWay Legacy: A Personal History of LifeWay Christian Resources and the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), Hobbs "was shouted off the platform."

<sup>24</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1970), 83.

Message Statement on the Scriptures,” and the motion passed,<sup>25</sup> while Larry Lewis’s resolution on doctrinal integrity vis-à-vis the SBC seminaries was ruled out of order.<sup>26</sup> In 1980 at St. Louis, Hobbs spoke effectively against the motion by Wayne A. Stevens, which would prescribe “quadrennial sessions” of the SBC with “regional conferences . . . in the intervening years,” and the motion failed.<sup>27</sup> Hobbs argued that the business of the SBC was “too big” for quadrennial meetings.<sup>28</sup> But on a more substantive issue Hobbs was not successful. To the resolution on doctrinal integrity, now more specific by requiring SBC seminary professors to teach “the infallibility of the original manuscripts” of the Bible, Hobbs offered an amendment which, in place of this more specific language, would strongly urge seminary trustees and administrators to make sure that all teaching is “within the framework of the Abstract of Principles and/or the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963.” The amendment failed, and the resolution was adopted.<sup>29</sup> Bill J. Leonard has reported that Hobbs “was drowned out by a chorus of boos from the audience,”<sup>30</sup> and, according to Jesse Fletcher, it was now “certainly obvious” that “traditional leadership no longer wielded its old power.”<sup>31</sup>

At the 1985 SBC session in Dallas, Hobbs the veteran statesman was named to the 22-member Peace Committee as proposed by Bill Hickem of Florida and Franklin Paschall of Tennessee.<sup>32</sup> He would be considered a neutral or nonaligned member.<sup>33</sup> At Dallas the Oklahoma pastor was successful in speaking against the motion by Anthony Scotto of Florida to remove the words “mixture of” from article one of the Baptist Faith and Message so that it would read “truth, without any error, for its matter.”<sup>34</sup> Hobbs noted that the words had been taken from the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message, which had taken them from the 1833 New Hampshire Confession. Moreover, he argued, Adrian Rogers and Paul Pressler had endorsed the language.<sup>35</sup> Scotto’s motion failed.<sup>36</sup> As a member of the Peace Committee, the Oklahoman successfully contended that the four indicia of the conservative understanding

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 1979, 31, 45.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 32, 55–56.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1980, 29, 43.

<sup>28</sup>Toby Druin, “1980 Convention Asserted Conservatism,” *Baptist Standard*, 18 June 1980, 3; see also “Barnett Loses Change Bid,” *Baptist Messenger*, 19 June 1980, 9.

<sup>29</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1980), 50–51. Hobbs argued against the resolution on the basis that it was a threat to Baptist freedom and could lead to creedalism. “Messengers Debate Abortion, Doctrinal Integrity, School Prayer Issues,” *Word and Way*, 19 June 1980, 4.

<sup>30</sup>Bill J. Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 52.

<sup>31</sup>Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 268.

<sup>32</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1985), 64–65, 77–78.

<sup>33</sup>Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 254.

<sup>34</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1985), 73, 87. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 284, misinterpreted this action when he reported: “Hobbs was roundly defeated when he made an effort to alter the Baptist Faith and Message to a more conciliatory position for inerrantists.”

<sup>35</sup>“Messengers Defeat Revision of Statement,” *Baptist Standard*, 19 June 1985, 9.

<sup>36</sup>SBC, *Annual* (1985), 87.



of the Bible (Adam and Eve as historical, named authors of biblical books as authors, historicity of miracles, and accuracy of historical narratives) should be retained as “Findings” in the committee report rather than be made “Recommendations.”<sup>37</sup> In 1993, Hobbs urged Oklahoma “moderates” “to get in or get out” of the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF).<sup>38</sup> In February 1993, the veteran Southern Baptist statesman issued to Baptist news media an eight-page proposal entitled “Food for Thought.” He called upon the SBC’s “fundamental-conservative leaders to share power with their moderate-conservative brethren” by adhering to the Peace Committee’s recommendation for balanced appointments to boards, commissions, and committees. Convention leaders are not free to act contrary to this recommendation, Hobbs argued, and following it could end the controversy and give the CBF “no valid reason to exist.” Neither Morris Chapman of the SBC Executive Committee nor Cecil Sherman of the CBF was encouraging in response, but Hobbs urged both sides to come together at the forthcoming SBC session in Houston.<sup>39</sup> In May, Lloyd Elder issued “a 16-page research report on SBC trends” in which he advocated amending the SBC constitution and bylaws so as to make five changes:

1. Involve state conventions in the nomination of half the people to serve on SBC boards, commissions, and committees.
2. Change how messengers qualify for the SBC annual meeting.
3. Increase the maximum number of messengers from a church from 10 to 20.
4. Have the SBC’s president and first vice president be elected for two years and alternate between lay people and ordained ministers.
5. Have the convention be held every two years and include simultaneous regional conventions through television hook-ups.

Chapman criticized the Elder proposal as a “total departure from time-honored, historic Southern Baptist practice.” On 31 May, Hobbs and Elder met and agreed to combine their agendas and invited “all state convention presidents, state convention board chairmen, and state convention executive directors to a dialogue session June 14 in Houston” “as a last-ditch effort to save the SBC from splitting or dwindling away.”<sup>40</sup> A committee from the 14 June meeting was to continue to study the proposals,<sup>41</sup> but neither side had

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 1987, 232–42; Hobbs, *My Faith and Message*, 262–63.

<sup>38</sup>Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 342.

<sup>39</sup>Greg Warner, “Hobbs Urges SBC Leaders to Share Power,” *Baptist Standard*, 24 February 1993, 3, 5.

<sup>40</sup>Mark Wingfield, “Hobbs, Elder Ask New ‘Mission Movement,’” *Baptist Standard*, 9 June 1993, 3–4.

<sup>41</sup>Presnall H. Wood, “SBC Houston: A Message-Sending Meeting,” *Baptist Standard*,

the will to move toward implementation.<sup>42</sup> Neither side was listening to the veteran denominational leader from Oklahoma or to the former president of the Sunday School Board.

## II

What has been Herschel Hobbs's legacy during the sixteen years since his death, whether in the CBF or in the SBC? In 1987, Leon McBeth had written that "future [Baptist] historians must take account" of Hobbs as a pastor-theologian.<sup>43</sup> In 2000, Jerry Faught reckoned him as "perhaps the finest denominational statesman Southern Baptists have ever known" and one who "prized denominational solidarity, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the gospel."<sup>44</sup> In 2001, David Dockery identified Hobbs as "one of the most influential and shaping leaders in Southern Baptist life in the twentieth century."<sup>45</sup> But in the twenty-first century has Hobbs been read, discussed, and/or followed?

It is hardly to be disputed that E.Y. Mullins serves as the leading theological influence in the CBF.<sup>46</sup> Nor is it likely to be disputed that Hobbs was the leading exponent of Mullins's theology during the last half of the twentieth century.<sup>47</sup> One would have reason to expect that during the two decades of its existence the CBF would exhibit a strong emphasis on the theology of Hobbs, but the opposite has occurred. The leading living thinker in the CBF, Walter B. Shurden, has celebrated Hobbs but has not habitually quoted from Hobbs's writings. In a study course book published in 1987, Shurden alluded to Hobbs as "probably" the "most prominent denominational statesman" among Southern Baptists.<sup>48</sup> But thereafter Shurden has been silent as to the Oklahoma pastor. In *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms*,<sup>49</sup> he did not mention or quote from Hobbs or list any writing of his in a bibliography. In the four books edited by Shurden and designed to explicate these freedoms,<sup>50</sup> no author cited or quoted from Hobbs or included him in a

23 June 1993, 6.

<sup>42</sup>Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 375.

<sup>43</sup>McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 676.

<sup>44</sup>Faught, "The Denominationalism of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907–1995)," 17.

<sup>45</sup>Dockery, "Herschel H. Hobbs," 216.

<sup>46</sup>*Review and Expositor* 96.1 (Winter 1999); *Baptist History and Heritage* 43.1 (Winter 2008).

<sup>47</sup>See especially Herschel H. Hobbs (with E.Y. Mullins), *The Axioms of Religion* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978). In 1980, Walter B. Shurden called Hobbs "the E.Y. Mullins' of the 1960s and 1970s." "The Pastor as Denominational Theologian in Southern Baptist History," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 15.3 (July 1980): 21.

<sup>48</sup>Walter B. Shurden, *The Doctrine of Priesthood of Believers* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1987), 21–22.

<sup>49</sup>Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993).

<sup>50</sup>Walter B. Shurden, ed., *Proclaiming the Vision: The Bible* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1994); idem, *Proclaiming the Vision: The Church* (ibid., 1996); idem, *Proclaiming the Vision: Religious Liberty* (ibid., 1997); idem, *Proclaiming the Vision: Baptism, Lord's Supper*

bibliography. In a book highly critical of “fundamentalist” control of the SBC, Bruce T. Gourley wrote three pages on the Elliott Controversy and the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message without mentioning the name of Hobbs.<sup>51</sup> In a 23-page booklet on Baptist theology weighted toward academic theologians rather than pastor-theologians,<sup>52</sup> Fisher H. Humphreys made no mention of Hobbs. In their 224-page history of Baptists in the United States, Pamela R. Durso and Keith E. Durso have made no mention of Hobbs while devoting three pages to Mullins.<sup>53</sup>

How has Hobbs fared in the SBC? Broadman & Holman, as of September 2011, has three<sup>54</sup> of Hobbs’s books in print and as ebooks: *Fundamentals of Our Faith*, *What Baptists Believe*, and *The Illustrated Life of Jesus*.<sup>55</sup> But in a major textbook in systematic theology with multiple authors for use in SBC seminaries, published in 2007, there was little reference to Hobbs or any of his writings in its fifteen chapters.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, two Southern Baptist volumes, the one espousing and the other refuting Dortian Calvinism, have taken note of Hobbs. In the pro-Calvinist volume David Dockery asserted that Hobbs “led Southern Baptists . . . toward a modified understanding of predestination and foreknowledge,” “was almost a thoroughgoing Arminian who believed in eternal security, but . . . was also a thoroughgoing biblicist,” and “would not have been one of those trying to lead Southern Baptists to become another liberal mainline denomination.”<sup>57</sup> Malcolm B. Yarnell III, similarly noted Hobbs’s redefinition of election “as an eternal redemptive plan for those who are ‘in Christ’” and his defense of perseverance.<sup>58</sup> In the anti-Calvinist volume Jerry Vines quoted Hobbs concerning John 3:16 and 2 Tim. 3:16,<sup>59</sup> and Richard D. Land cited two of Hobbs’s books.<sup>60</sup> But the most comprehensive and celebrative treatment of Hobbs,

(*ibid.*, 1999).

<sup>51</sup>Bruce T. Gourley, *The Godmakers: A Legacy of the Southern Baptist Convention?* (Franklin, TN: Providence House, 1996), 52–54, 94–95, 99–100.

<sup>52</sup>Fisher H. Humphreys, *Baptist Theology: A Really Short Version* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2007).

<sup>53</sup>Pamela R. Durso and Keith E. Durso, *The Story of Baptists in the United States* (Brentwood, TN: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2006), esp. 177–79. James P. Boyce, John A. Broadus, C.H. Toy, W.B. Riley, and Billy Graham were also not mentioned.

<sup>54</sup>Selma Wilson to James Leo Garrett Jr., 7 September 2011. During the preceding six months more than 1,000 copies of these books were sold. Two of the three are doctrinal.

<sup>55</sup>*The Illustrated Life of Jesus* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2000).

<sup>56</sup>Daniel L. Akin, ed., *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007). Nor was there much reference to W.A. Criswell.

<sup>57</sup>David S. Dockery, “Southern Baptists and Calvinism: A Historical Look,” in *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brad J. Waggoner (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008), 38–39. See also 40, 45.

<sup>58</sup>Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Calvinism: Cause for Rejoicing, Cause for Concern,” in *Calvinism*, ed. Clendenen and Waggoner, 84. See also 189, 260.

<sup>59</sup>Jerry Vines, “Sermon on John 3:16,” in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical–Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 13, 24.

<sup>60</sup>Richard D. Land, “Congruent Election: Understanding Salvation from an ‘Eternal

though not uncritical, from an SBC author has been by Dockery.<sup>61</sup> The only treatment that compares with Dockery, whether from the SBC or the CBF, has been Jerry Faught's carefully researched Gaskin Lectures.<sup>62</sup> Had Hobbs lived to respond to R. Albert Mohler's application of triage in the hospital emergency room or disaster medicine so as to foster three levels of theological beliefs,<sup>63</sup> one might indeed anticipate that the Oklahoman would have agreed.

Is there a basis for advocating a renewal of interest today in the writings and leadership of Herschel Hobbs? I would argue in the affirmative. The works of Hobbs in biblical exegesis and exposition is foundational. His "unity in diversity" needs reconsideration. The CBF needs a focus on unity, and the SBC on diversity. Hobbs's textual, expository, and topical sermons make him a preacher for all seasons. His passion for evangelism and missions could help pastors and churches to get serious about church planting and about people groups. In a time when parachurch movements have attracted many and denominational loyalty is waning among many, Hobbs looms large as an exemplary denominational servant-leader. A renewal of interest in Hobbs does not require acceptance of all his positions, such as, for example, election as a plan, his idiosyncratic interpretation of Hebrews 6:1-6, or his anti-creedalism unbalanced by legitimate confessionalism.

Let representatives of the CBF break their silence concerning Hobbs so as not only to find him as Mullins redivivus but also as the full-orbed Baptist leader that he was. Let Broadman & Holman inaugurate a new series of twentieth-century Baptist classics, of which the republication of Hobbs's sermons would be a central feature, and I nominate five of these.<sup>64</sup> Let the doctoral studies in leadership<sup>65</sup> give serious attention to Hobbs's leadership. Let Oklahoma Baptist University make sure that a well-researched, well-written biography of Hobbs be written and published. Such would be some of the features of a renewal of attention to Oklahoma's adopted son, Herschel Harold Hobbs.

Nour Perspective," in *Whosoever Will*, ed. Allen and Lemke, 51n23, 55n31.

<sup>61</sup>Dockery, "Herschel H. Hobbs"; idem, "The Life and Legacy of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907-1995)."

<sup>62</sup>Faught, "The Biblical Theology of Herschel H. Hobbs"; idem, "The Denominationalism of Herschel H. Hobbs (1907-1995)." Both Dockery and Faught had interviews with Hobbs.

<sup>63</sup><http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/07/12a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/> (Accessioned 14 September 2011).

<sup>64</sup>*Who Is This?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1952), sermons on Christology; *The Gospel of Giving* (Nashville: Broadman, 1954); *Moses' Mighty Men* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), sermons on all the men associated with Moses; *The Crucial Words from Calvary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), sermons on Jesus' seven words from the cross; and *Messages on the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), sermons on 1 Corinthians 15.

<sup>65</sup>As at Dallas Baptist University.

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## *Theological Drift—World War II–1979*

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Gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Gonna lay down my sword and shield  
Down by the riverside  
Ain't gonna study war no more.

Gonna stick my sword in the golden sand  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Down by the riverside  
Gonna stick my sword in the golden sand  
Down by the riverside  
Gonna study war no more.<sup>1</sup>

Sweet sentiments—but when I stepped off the plane in 1990 in New Orleans, Louisiana, and was handed an invitation from Texas lawyer, Cactus Cagle, to a celebration of victory on Tuesday following the evening session of the Southern Baptist Convention, I was quite certain that the celebration was premature and that the event itself would cause the golden sand to yield its grip on swords, which would once again be wielded in denominational combat.

On the night appointed, exuberant conservatives descended on the famous French coffee shop, Café du Monde.<sup>2</sup> The aroma of café au lait and powdered sugar-covered beignets was discernible several hundred feet from the famous coffee house. That night as the convention parliamentarian led the rejoicing conservatives in singing “Victory in Jesus,” that coffee aroma was to conservatives the aroma of life unto life, but to scores of moderates who had tasted several years of defeat, it became the aroma of death unto

<sup>1</sup>“Down by the Riverside,” traditional spiritual.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 196–97. Judge Pressler describes vividly the events of the evening.

death. So monumental was the conflict manifesting itself that Cagle actually petitioned Café du Monde for permission to place a commemorative bronze plaque on the wall—a petition quietly denied. Somehow, the confrontation in the New Orleans French Quarter that night was characteristic of the previous eleven years of life in the Southern Baptist Convention and would chart the course for the next ten years. What lay behind this less than civil war in a convention that had been born out of currents leading to America's Civil War shortly after its birth?

Early American Baptists were even more agrarian than most of their neighbors in the New World. Commoners, “butchers, bakers and candlestick makers,” they by nature adapted marvelously to the spread of both civilization and the gospel to the frontier. In Texas, Baptist preachers carried along with their Bibles, swords of steel, Bowie knives, revolvers, and later repeating rifles. B.H. Carroll, the founder and first president of Southwestern Seminary, was a Texas Ranger who at fifty yards could shoot the ticks off his dog without scratching the dog. Southwestern's second president, Lee Rutland Scarborough, was a cowboy and a great personal evangelist. In 1904, two rival state paper editors, S.A. Hayden and J.B. Cranfill, staged a shoot-out in a railway car on the way to a convention. Zane Mason in *Frontiersmen of the Faith* chronicles a day in the life of Texas Baptist wilderness revivals:

That the frontier Baptists took Indian dangers as a matter of course, seems evident by an incident that took place at Weatherford, Parker County. A revival meeting was in progress at the Grind Stone Baptist Church, being held by Rev. Lee Newton. A party of fifteen mounted Indians passed in a few hundred yards of the place of worship, driving a number of horses. Some ten or more men gave chase, with at least eight men going on to the Indian camp, where “they captured four horses, two saddles, a few blankets, one hat, some quilts, etc.” The Indians fled and the men missed a fight, but felt lifted in spirit by the taking of spoils. This feeling of elation was added to the revival fires and great results were seen; namely, “Twenty-two joined by letter, five by experience and baptism, and a score or more gave unmistakable evidence of their determination to forsake the paths of sin and seek the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

The first Baptist preacher in Texas, Joseph Bays, apparently arrived in the summer of 1820. Robert Baker describes him:

This tall, powerfully built man looked more like an Indian fighter than the first Baptist preacher of record in Texas. Born in North Carolina into a non-conformist English family, he had been

<sup>3</sup>Zane Allen Mason, *Frontiersmen of the Faith: A History of Baptist Pioneer Work in Texas 1865–1885* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1970), 47–48.

taken as a boy to Kentucky where he was reared in the shadow of Daniel Boone. After the death of his father, his mother taught him to read and write using the Bible as a textbook. In later years, it was noted that he would quote long passages from the Scriptures rarely looking at his open Bible, having memorized the text as a lad. The religious character of his family may be glimpsed in the names given to his brothers. His biblical name (Joseph) was matched by those of his brothers, who were called John, Peter, Isaac, Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego.<sup>4</sup>

Two recent novels highlight this pioneer period. In the novella *A Strange Star*, B.H. Cormac is a character patterned after the life of B.H. Carroll and demonstrates vividly the life of Baptists on the frontier. The other novel, *Where the Ground Is Even: A Christmas in the Arizona High Country* by the same author, is a book that not only paints a picture of the push of the gospel to the West but also offers appropriate reading for lost men who wish for adventure but seldom look to Christ.<sup>5</sup>

There is much to criticize in observations characterized by rambunctious behavior, but within this limited picture is the portrait of a freedom-loving, independent, passionate people, who possessed for the most part a compelling, experiential faith given to vivid, emotional expressions. Revival fires swept across the American wilderness. Viewing their better educated, wealthier, and more sophisticated counterparts, who sometimes exhibited elitist airs, these Baptists often were suspicious of the possibly deleterious impact of formal study. Was it not enough to know how to read carefully the Scriptures?

As Bernard Weisberger put it in his critical but classic 1958 volume,

The marriage of human reason and divine guidance was something for the urban few. The country gentlemen of the old landholding upper classes remained Episcopalian, largely by habit. A few social leaders of the rising cities were willing to compromise on Unitarianism, yet even this was true only in Boston to any large extent. But a religion hugged close by patrician Boston was not an answer to the needs of the New England countryside. Lyman Beecher, when he was a Presbyterian minister in the “hub of the universe,” never missed a chance to point out that the Unitarians were aristocrats who ground the faces of the poor. He said that their control of Harvard was “silently putting sentinels in the churches, legislators in the hall and judges on the bench, and scattering everywhere physicians, lawyers and merchants.”

<sup>4</sup>Robert A. Baker, *The Blossoming Desert: A Concise History of Texas Baptists* (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 14.

<sup>5</sup>Armour Patterson, *A Strange Star* (Fort Worth: Seminary Hill, 2008) and *Where the Ground Is Even: A Christmas in the Arizona High Country* (Collierville, TN: Innovo, 2009).

Hard-working farmers and self-taught small-town leaders were apt to share Beecher's resentment over the fact that in the contest for church members, "Unitarianism . . . had a better chance, on the score of *talents, learning, wealth* and popular favor," than the faithful.<sup>6</sup>

Or again,

For among the props on which revivalism rested, two were fundamental. One was the importance of emotion in religion. The other was the significance of the individual. It was his salvation that would always be the first and foremost goal.

In 1800 two of these props were being hewed out of native timber. A wild, free, singing flavor was introduced itself into religion on the frontier, flinging the gates of redemption brazenly and invitingly ajar. In the flickering light of Kentucky campfires, amid hallelujahs and handclaps, the Great Revival of 1800 was beginning to make a tradition.<sup>7</sup>

But there were other Baptists in the South who recognized the need for ministerial education and were convinced that this would not compromise the faith but rather accentuate and spread the faith. In the end, both groups were right. But the second group proposed that a seminary be established in Greenville, South Carolina. The seminary opened in the fall of 1859 with Professors James P. Boyce, John A. Broadus, Basil Manly, Jr., and William Williams instructing twenty-six students.<sup>8</sup>

However, trouble was never far away. The fifth professor was added in 1869. Crawford Howell Toy was named as professor of Old Testament. The Proverbs volume in *The International Critical Commentary* series was published in 1899 and reveals both the incalculable brilliance and the theological drift that characterized Toy. In his first semester at Southern Seminary, he revealed that he had embraced Darwinian thought as well as the Graf-Wellhausen theory on the composition of the Hexateuch.<sup>9</sup> Typical of Toy's position is this observation about Old Testament books:

The name "Moses" stands for legislators of all periods; no psalm or other production ascribed by the tradition to David can be assigned him without examination of its contents; large parts of the books of Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah were certainly not written by the prophets whose names they

<sup>6</sup>Bernard A. Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River: The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact upon Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 17.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>8</sup>Robert A. Baker, *The Southern Baptist Convention and Its People 1607–1972* (Nashville: Broadman, 1974), 201.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 302.



bear, and Jonah and Daniel had nothing to do with the composition of the books called after them.<sup>10</sup>

By 1879, Toy had been dismissed by trustees, and his romance with the soon-to-be-famous missionary Lottie Moon had withered on the theological vine. Could Toy have misread Boyce and Broadus about the commitments of Southern Seminary? Were Boyce and others so enamored with the genius of Toy that they were careless in their interrogation? Neither seems likely. Whatever the case, the Toy incident presaged the future in Baptist life.

However, Baptists sequestered in the South remained virtually immune to the controversies that racked other denominations prior to World War II. Baptists in the old Confederate states may have suffered from a fortress complex; but if they did thus suffer, it only meant that their evangelistic, revivalistic, church-planting energies took a careful bead on everything inside the fort and proceeded with unparalleled success and growth. There was no paucity of controversy, but these conflicts were about what the Bible says, not about what the Bible is.

The world expanded rapidly with the fall of Germany and the surrender of Japan. Southern Baptists invaded the world with the gospel and were in turn infiltrated by the same world. This infiltration first became evident in changes in perspective within the colleges and universities operated by state Baptist conventions. Mercer University in Georgia, Stetson University in Florida, Wake Forest University in North Carolina, The University of Richmond in Virginia, Samford University in Alabama, and the big tuna, Baylor University in Texas—to name a few—began a steady drift to the left, often under the oversight of an orthodox president and board. In this departure from the faith of their founders, they followed the pattern already well established in America at Yale, Harvard, Brown, etc.

By comity agreement, Baptist colleges and universities were operated by state Baptist conventions, while the national body, the Southern Baptist Convention, was responsible for distinctively theological education through the work of six seminaries regionally located in Louisville, Kentucky; Fort Worth, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Wake Forest, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; and San Francisco, California. Professors in the seminaries began, after World War II, to travel abroad for study, and the seminaries began hiring teachers from beyond the usual fishing ponds, SBC churches.

The reasons for abandonment of the vision of the founding fathers in four of these seminaries is more complex than what I have stated here, but it was abandonment with the two exceptions of Southeastern and Midwestern, which from their inception were to the left of most of their Southern Baptist constituency. Moderates (a strange concoction of classical liberals, neo-orthodox, and self-styled denominational loyalists) sought the high ground in the media by calling the conservative renaissance in the Southern Baptist

<sup>10</sup>Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), xix.

Convention a “takeover” movement.<sup>11</sup> While this accusation is generally suspect, the moderates had a point in the latter two institutions, which today employ only those who are advocates of biblical inerrancy.

The inevitable followed. First Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia, the founding location of the Southern Baptist Convention, together with First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina, perhaps the single most influential church in the developmental days of the Southern Baptist Convention, both shifted away from their conservative base. Meyers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, with its colorful and well known pastor, Carlyle Marney, joined with Texas churches, such as First Baptist Church and University Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, and Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, in adopting postures similar to those visible in the United Methodist Church. The flagship churches of the denomination gradually became First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas; Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee; First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida; and others.

Evangelicals outside of Southern Baptist life were cognizant of the drift. They knew the drill—loose the denominational boat from the moorings of its founders, and, stripped of rudder and locomotion, the gradual journey of riding the contemporary currents would take the boat to a new home somewhere downstream. John R. Rice turned the torch of *The Sword of the Lord* on Southern Baptists. Sometimes he was not fair, but cleverly cobbled together with sermons on “soul-winning” and reports of revival, the reports of Southern Baptist apostasy had a general ring of truth. And while Southern Baptist leadership either excoriated their former associate or else desperately attempted to ignore this now Independent Baptist hornet, in the days of my youth I went into few offices of Southern Baptist pastors who did not have the latest issue of *The Sword*. Rice graduated to heaven never knowing, I suspect, the extent of his impact on the denomination he had left.

The Evangelical Theological Society was beginning to expand, but Southern Baptist participation was limited to ten or fewer. Hallway discussions of Covenant Theologians and Dispensationalists alike decried the apparently helpless condition of Southern Baptists, and no one seriously anticipated a day when these country cousins would crash the ETS party. Dallas Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary became increasingly the home of Southern Baptist students who held to *sola scriptura*.

As the “seamless robe” of Southern Baptist life began to exhibit signs of fraying of the fabric, reform efforts were launched. In the sixties, William “Bill” Powell with associates Gerald Primm, Calvin Capps, M.O. Owens, and Robert Tenery marshaled an effort to rectify the waning orthodoxy of the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>12</sup> Some would adjudicate this venture a

<sup>11</sup>See for example, Robison James and Gary Leazer, eds. *The Takeover in the Southern Baptist Convention: A Brief History* (Decatur, GA: Baptists Today, 1994).

<sup>12</sup>Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die*, 77–78. See also Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*:

failure, but a more prudent conclusion would be that these were all tremors contributing to the seismological shift that would reshape the Southern Baptist Convention landscape beginning in 1979.

Other seismic rumbles included two major controversies regarding publications of the Sunday School Board (now LifeWay) of the SBC. Both, perhaps predictably, focused on the historicity of the early portions of the Genesis narrative. On January 10, 1962, K. Owen White, highly esteemed pastor of the First Baptist Church in Houston, published an article in the *Baptist Standard*, the state Baptist oracle for Texas, provocatively entitled “Death in the Pot.”<sup>13</sup> This essay, based on the incident from the life of Elisha (2 Kings 4:38–41), fingered a recent publication by a Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Old Testament professor, Ralph Elliott, entitled *The Message of Genesis*, which, White alleged, contained serious theological error. One observer put the matter as follows.

If White’s immediate target was the work of Elliot [*sic*], his article was received enthusiastically by many Baptists in Waxahachie, Texas; Yazoo City, Mississippi; Soddy Daisy, Tennessee; Lizard Lick, North Carolina; and hundreds of other towns. Its ramifications extended to feature the entire superstructure of Southern Baptist Convention denominational institutions and agencies as a seething, noxious pot for which no healing pinch of flour from a prophet’s hand had been forthcoming. This perception included two general features: a general distrust for the pot itself (the bureaucracy), and the suspicion that someone had visited Deutschland and returned with a “Tubingen gourd” and poisoned the life-giving gospel stew that the pot was supposed to be warming.<sup>14</sup>

The second major controversy involved the first volume of the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, edited by noted neo-orthodox scholar Clifton J. Allen and published by the denomination’s publishing house. Other volumes of the commentary would also come under fire, such as Roy Honeycutt’s work on Exodus. But G. Henton Davies’ assessment of Genesis created a Vesuvian eruption on the floor of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting

*The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 62–77.

<sup>13</sup>Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 8. Less known but equally important is Sutton’s dissertation at Southwestern entitled “A Comparison Between the Down Grade Controversy and Tensions over Biblical Inerrancy in the Southern Baptist Convention,” 1982. The dissertation, while perceptive, was almost denied because faculty and administration recognized that the comparison with the Down Grade Controversy would likely further undermine the “moderate” hegemony of Southwestern in the Southern Baptist Convention. They were correct.

<sup>14</sup>Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978–2004* (Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 1.

in June of 1970 in Denver. The debate resulted in a decision by Broadman to reissue the volume on Genesis to be written by well-known scholar Clyde T. Francisco, perceived by many to be one of the more conservative professors at Southern Seminary and in the Southern Baptist Convention. However, most conservatives did not trust him and were not pacified. When Ralph Elliott published his memoirs in 1992, he was unable to conceal his antipathy for Francisco. He considered the latter to be nothing more than a shrewd politician, an accomplished practitioner of rhetorical “doublespeak.”

“Doublespeak” has become an insidious disease within Southern Baptist life. Through the years, the program at Southern Seminary has acquainted students with the best in current research in the given fields of study. Often, however, this was done with an eye and ear for the “gallery” and how much the “church trade” would bear. Professors and students learn to couch their beliefs in acceptable terminology and in holy jargon so that although thinking one thing, the speaker calculated so as to cause the hearer to affirm something else. When I taught at Southern Seminary years ago, we often said to one professor who was particularly gifted at this “doublespeak” game, that if the Southern Baptist Convention should split, he would be the first speaker at both new conventions. . . . It is my personal belief that this doublespeak across the years has contributed to a lack of nurture and growth and is a major factor in the present problems. The basic question is one of integrity rather than the gift of communication.<sup>15</sup>

These public controversies were blazing infernos stoked by a plethora of smaller but nonetheless convincing campfires in the Southern Baptist forest. To mention just one as an example, the faculty of Southern Seminary on August 26, 1976, approved a revealing master’s thesis by Noel Wesley Hollyfield Jr., entitled “A Sociological Analysis of the Degrees of ‘Christian Orthodoxy’ Among Selected Students in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.” Readers who approved this thesis were G. Willis Bennett, Henlee Barnett, and E. Glenn Hinson, the latter of whom became one of the major figures in the controversy. Bill Powell of the conservative *Southern Baptist Journal* discovered the thesis, appended an explanatory sheet to the front of the document, and distributed the treatise widely in the Southern Baptist Convention.

<sup>15</sup>Ralph H. Elliott, *The “Genesis Controversy” and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 33–34. This memoir by the embattled professor was intended as a rebuke for conservative Southern Baptists, but the consequence of the volume was to confirm that the conservatives were in a target-rich environment when searching for liberalism in the SBC. As such, it remains one of the eight or ten most important assessments of the era.

While such statistical evaluations suffer from acknowledged limitation, there was more than sufficient grist for conservative mills in Hollyfield's work. In a word, not a few denominational fence-straddlers, with one foot firmly dangling on the "denominational loyalty" side of the fence and the other on the side of the integrity of Scripture, were zapped right off the fence and into the burgeoning conservative renaissance because of the distribution of this thesis. Among a host of other startling revelations, Hollyfield, who himself was no conservative, demonstrated that the longer a student remained at Southern Seminary, the less likely he was to embrace the position of Christian orthodoxy. Just as a sampling, asked if they believed that there is life beyond death, 89% of first-year students acquiesced; but, for those in their final year, only 42% could affirm this belief. Among first-year students, 87% had no doubts about the deity of Jesus, but only 63% of third-year students held this view.<sup>16</sup> The deterioration of orthodoxy continued and escalated among doctoral students.

However much Southern Seminary professors of that era were isolated in their carrels on Lexington Road, could they have been blissfully unaware of these developments among the students? There is no evidence that Hollyfield's findings elicited any chagrin among the seminary's trustees, administration, or faculty. Had Powell not made the matter public, the thesis would doubtless have suffered the fate of most such Herculean efforts—months of diligence issuing in a product read by three academes and then confined to a crypt in a vertical cemetery to await a resurrection that would likely never come. As it developed, many a common laborer from Georgia to California read the only master's thesis he had ever seen. Smoke signals wafted from the Georgia mountains to alert members of the Baptist tribe all over America to the fact that whatever was rotten in Denmark was also failing the theological sniff test at Southern Seminary.

Among conservatives, one could hear hallway chatter like, "Southern Seminary is the mother of all harlots [spiritually and theologically speaking] in the earth, and Midwestern and Southeastern are her daughters, who have exceeded their mother in harlotry." The non-mention of New Orleans, Southwestern, and Golden Gate was no "get out of jail free" pass, but only a general acknowledgment of the relative seriousness of the problem.

About this time, Clayton Sullivan, then professor of philosophy at University of Southern Mississippi, delivered what he undoubtedly hoped would be a devastating kick to the conservative solar plexus. This monograph took the form of an autobiographical interpretation of his journey from Mississippi College to Southern Seminary to an abortive attempt to serve as a pastor bereft of the benefit of much more than a social gospel message denuded of any certainty about the voice of God in sacred literature. Conservatives

<sup>16</sup>William A. Powell, *Seminary Approved "Orthodoxy" Thesis*; pamphlet published by Southern Baptist Journal, n.p.

can perhaps be forgiven for believing that God had “confused the counsel of Ahithophel” (2 Sam 15:31).

This rollicking, sad, and gripping account of 1985 confirmed in a single life all that Hollyfield had alleged in his statistical study. In Sullivan, numbers became incarnate as the audience listened to the colorful philosopher.

As a seminarian I was fortunate because in the 1950s a remarkable cluster of teachers composed Southern Seminary’s faculty, persons of intelligence and ability. Duke McCall was the seminary’s president. T.C. Smith, Henry Turlington, and Heber Peacock were professors of New Testament. Estill (“Pistol Pete”) Jones taught Greek and T.D. Price and Hugh Wamble lectured in church history. Wayne Ward, Dale Moody, and Eric Rust were professors of theology. Henlee Barnette and Guy Ranson taught ethics. Bill Morton and Morris Ashcraft were in archaeology, while Clyde Francisco and J.J. Owens were professors of Old Testament. Wayne Oates excelled in psychology of religion. There were others.<sup>17</sup>

The results were as follows.

As a seminarian, still in my mid-twenties, I found myself baffled. I was more certain of what I *didn’t* believe, Southern Seminary had destroyed my biblical fundamentalism but it had not given me anything viable to take its place. That’s the weakness of historical-critical method: its power to destroy exceeds its power to construct. The historical-critical method can give you facts and hypotheses but it cannot give you a vision.<sup>18</sup>

And the finished product of the brewer’s art can now be stated.

This anticlericalism was due, in part, to my professors’ ignorance of what it means to be a preacher. Most professors under whom I studied at Southern had no prolonged experience in the pastorate. That was unfortunate because they had no appreciation of the role the church plays in the lives of common people. They had no real understanding of what ministers do in relating to folk in the crises of life when sickness, divorce, tragedy, and death come. Maybe if all my seminary teachers had each conducted a hundred funerals the administration-faculty conflict I am relating would never have taken place. But in any case, because of their anticlericalism and denominational hostility some members of

<sup>17</sup>Clayton Sullivan, *Called to Preach Condemned to Survive: The Education of Clayton Sullivan* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985), 72.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

the faculty were not primarily interested in Southern Seminary as a service to the Southern Baptist Convention, as a preparatory school for working pastors. They wanted it to be a divinity school—the Harvard of the evangelical world, with a hyperintellectual approach to the Christian faith. They placed it in a world somehow “above” the Southern Baptist Convention and its fried-chicken-eating churches, a Laputa for Protestants alienated from their roots.<sup>19</sup>

And again.

I think I would have been a better preacher in Tylertown if I had been aware of Eastern faiths and of alternative religious experiences. Maybe I would not have gotten so upset over the “fallen sparrow” problem. For the Christian faith provides no rationale for the savage injustices we see around us and for the differences in talents, opportunities, and circumstances that exist among people. But if religions like Buddhism are right in contending we live not one life but many lives, experiencing human existence from different angles, then life’s injustices and vagaries might be endowed with meaning or purpose that otherwise is impossible.<sup>20</sup>

Another volume that circulated influentially was *The Long Way Home*, John Jewell’s story of loss and recovery of faith.<sup>21</sup> Though not set in a distinctively Southern Baptist setting, Jewell began his wilderness sojourn at William Jewell College, a Missouri Baptist school related to the Southern Baptist Convention. He continued at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and ended his journey in personal and family disaster. This was just another chapter of a sad book Baptists kept reading.

Moderates attempted several parries, one of which was to feature themselves as supporters of the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists while intimating that the conservatives lacked commitment. Although this was sometimes an accurate analysis, it rankled the conservative fur, and the backlash came in an infinite variety of forms. My wife found a wolf in sheep’s clothing figurine while shopping on the square in Santa Fe and bought it for me. To my shame I confess that I had a green Southern Seminary pin on it and preeminently exhibited it. With the dawning of the Mohler era at Southern and the better judgment of antiquity, I removed the Southern pin and keep it now as a cogent admonition to myself never to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing but to put first the flock of God to whom I owe so much.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>21</sup>John P. Jewell, *The Long Way Home* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

To summarize, the golden years of rapid Southern Baptist expansionism are chronicled well in a little known volume by Charles S. Kelley Jr., the current president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary—an account recording how the denomination of backwoods revivalists called Southern Baptists was catapulted into a position of increasing prominence in America. Isolationism gave way to mission efforts in all fifty states and Canada. Kelley notes in *How Did They Do It? The Story of Southern Baptist Evangelism*:

The genius of Southern Baptist evangelism is not in a particular methodology. It is in the development of an integrated process that finds unchurched people, exposes them to the gospel, bonds them with people in the church, and offers them a logical opportunity to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. Born in the rural South, Southern Baptists were able to glean from the farm a paradigm for evangelism. The paradigm was not the work of a taskforce and it has never been officially adopted and promoted as the way that Southern Baptists do evangelism. This is a paradigm for evangelism that gradually emerged as an expression of Southern Baptist life and theology. You will find it expressed, often unconsciously, in most Southern Baptist churches. The whole, not the individual parts, helped Southern Baptists become the largest Protestant denomination in America.<sup>22</sup>

T.A. Patterson, my father, noted in 1971 prior to the outbreak of the 1979 revolution, the following:

America is still the stronghold of evangelical Christianity. The work of the Lord is being done by men and women with convictions and not by those who are blown about by every wind of doctrine. Those who compromise, tone down, or deny the fundamental truths of God's Word are in no position to help anybody. The Christians of the first century were victorious because they had convictions worth living for and worth dying for. The greatest contribution to world peace is being made by the messengers of the cross of Christ.

Lest the position of Baptists be misunderstood, this additional word is in order: Baptists have always recognized and fought for the right of others to be free in their worship of God. They are glad for anything that others may achieve in bringing glory to God's name. They will make common cause with all other groups on a moral issue so long as no compromise of their

<sup>22</sup>Charles S. Kelley Jr., *How Did They Do It? The Story of Southern Baptist Evangelism* (Covington, LA: Insight, 1993), 117.



convictions is involved, but they will not turn away, if they know it, from teachings of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>23</sup>

The sunny optimism reflected in the judgments of my kinsmen was beginning to erode. The slippage chronicled above, as well as the new prominence of Southern Baptists snatching them as it were from the relative safety of their southern briar patch, all contributed to both internal tensions and external exposures, which would lead to the confrontation of 1979. My denominationally loyal but theologically conservative and pacifistic father had observed the first indications of blackening Southern Baptist skies signaling the advent of the storm. Counseling his then young preacher son, he warned,

Son, like the mainline denominations, Southern Baptists are drifting from the vital faith of the New Testament. In your lifetime, you will face difficult days and excruciating choices. When that hour comes, you must find out where Jesus and the Bible stand, and it is there that you must rivet your feet—whatever the cost. But you must “keep your heart diligently,” because even if you stand where you should, if you do so in lovelessness and bitterness toward even your most implacable enemy, God will withhold His blessings from your life and ministry.

Though my father’s words were the prophetic and perceptive observations of a real man of God and a seasoned pastor and denominational statesman, I do not think that he envisioned the extent of the problem, the range and intensity of the battle, the agony of injury sustained on all sides, or the long-term implications of the outcome. Not until he was already in declining years and, in reality, on his final couch did he know the degree to which his own son would be involved in his prophecy. Thankfully, death shielded him from a merely earthly perspective of all that was to come.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Armour Patterson, *Dear Dr. Pat* (Dallas: Crescendo, 1971), 146.

<sup>24</sup>My father did live long enough to enter the struggle as Sutton points out in his assessment of the 1970 Denver convention. Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 14–15. His assessment of the Denver convention is attached as an appendix.

## Appendix

### T.A. Patterson, "Did SBC Over-React?" *Baptist Standard*, June 17, 1970.

In the recent meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention a great deal of time was given to the discussion of Volume I, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, published by the Sunday School Board. Criticism focused on the first part of the volume, a commentary on Genesis prepared by G. Hinton Davies, a British writer and teacher. The vote requesting recall and revision of the volume was 5,394 to 2,170—a decisive margin.

Did the convention over-react?

No doubt a small minority would answer affirmatively. Still others would regard the whole episode as "a tempest in a teapot." The opinion of the majority was indicated by the ballot.

The messengers with whom I talked did not believe they had over-reacted. Among the reasons they gave for their point of view were the following:

For several years, they said, efforts have been made by individuals and small groups within the convention to minimize, if not erase, the distinctive beliefs cherished by most Baptists. Statements appearing in books and assorted periodicals clearly were designed to erode the distinctive doctrines for which Baptists have stood.

Comments, particularly by a few professors, were further confirmation of a disturbing trend. The embattled messengers saw in all this a dangerous drift away from the Word of God. The real point at issue, in their minds, was the integrity of the Holy Scriptures. Feeling that parts of *The Broadman Commentary* were in conflict with the affirmation of Baptists on the inspiration of the Bible, they thought it time for the convention messengers to assert themselves in unmistakable terms.

The aroused messengers had also observed the high esteem in which many modern theologians have been held in some academic circles despite the fact that their one point of agreement is that the Bible is a human production filled with errors. Davies, the author of the commentary on Genesis, appeared to mirror this trend of thought.

The messengers, sated with this fare, saw a chance to express their feelings about theological liberalism.

Convinced that a major factor in the decline of other denominations has been the persistent gnawing away of confidence in biblical infallibility, the messengers did not feel that they should stand idly by while it happened to Baptists. The contrast in Baptist churches that have been characterized by a dynamic and effective ministry when they exalted the Scriptures as God's inerrant Word was far from lost on the observers.

Messengers were irked by those who insisted that the Davies' commentary reflected mature scholarship. By implication those who disagree are shallow, superficial exponents of the Scriptures.

To many, such an evaluation denotes intellectual arrogance and pride. This was even more objectionable in light of the fact that among those who protested the commentary were able, well-trained preachers and teachers.

The messengers knew they could speak for no one except themselves, but they wanted to say to their fellow Baptists and to the world, "This is where we stand." *The Broadman Commentary* afforded the opportunity to express what had built up in their hearts over a period of years. Finally the silent majority became vocal. They believed their action was justified and that it was not overdone.

Noteworthy in the eye of the observer was the cosmopolitan nature of the no longer silent majority. When the standing vote was taken, evidence was unmistakable that the majority was constituted of a cross section of pastors, teachers, laymen, women—in short, those who make up the membership of the Baptist churches of many states.

## *Roping the Whirlwind—A Renaissance Plan*

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“This Cowboy’s Hat” is classic country-western narrative music. Chris LeDoux popularized the Jake Brooks’ song about two cowboys in a coffee shop. They were approached by a biker gang who were overconfident because of their numerical superiority but inferior in wit. They offered to rip the hat off the cowboy’s head. Cowboy LeDoux responds in song:

You’ll ride a black tornado—Across the western skies  
You’ll rope an ol’ blue norther—And milk it ‘til it’s dry  
Bulldog the Mississippi—and pin its ears down flat  
Long before you take this cowboy’s hat.

The images of riding tornadoes and roping “blue northers” remind me of the halcyon days of college and of the attempt to return the Southern Baptist Convention to the faith of its founding fathers. “Cowboy Chicken” is a game played in rodeos during bull-riding events. The four most courageous cowpokes sit in the middle of the arena at a table playing cards while the angered male of the bovine species crashes around the arena looking for someone to gore or trample. In college on the plains of West Texas, we developed our own version of this adventuresome challenge. Keeping a card table ready, when the tornado sirens sounded, signaling the approach of a black funnel, we ran to a previously specified open field on the northwest side of Abilene, set up the table, and began to play dominoes. The rules for winning had nothing to do with the score. The last to run for the ditch was the winner. Had the annual Darwin Awards been available, we would all have been candidates, but adrenaline junkies can never get enough.

Having attended a western university, I did learn that roping and riding the whirlwind is not just formidable—it is clearly impossible! Yet, this is precisely what conservative Southern Baptists were attempting in June, 1979, when the convention convened in Houston, Texas. Every denominational executive was either liberal or too frightened to buck the ride. All six seminaries were adrift from the Southern Baptist theology that had been the basis of the denomination’s radical growth. Only 20 or so out of more than 200 professors were conservative, and few would sally forth to battle for

conservative theology. Every state paper, except the small publication in Indiana, was unsympathetic to conservative concerns. Denominational leaders were adept at doublespeak, just as Ralph Elliott alleged. They knew well the vocabulary expected by the average Southern Baptist and conveniently failed to inform these followers that the definitions had been altered. These leaders had also become adroit at isolating and humiliating anyone who dared raise questions about the denomination. Only about 5 out of 56 colleges and universities—and these were the smaller, less influential ones—were operating with a biblical worldview.

Against all odds, Bible-honoring Southern Baptists held that the majority of Southern Baptist people and churches believed every syllable of the Bible. The obvious problem was: How do you rope the “norther”? Is there a way to ride the black tornado? About the same time that Southern Baptists were twirling their ropes and testing their spurs, the Missouri Synod Lutherans under the leadership of Robert Preus and others made an apparently successful ride of their tornadic denominational structure. This encouraged conservative Baptist hearts, even if some of the gains secured have not seemed to hold.

Often I am asked, “What was your strategy?” We did have one, of sorts. But honesty compels me to admit that it was more like “The Charge of the Light Brigade” than Normandy. As Alfred, Lord Tennyson, described it:

‘Forward, the Light Brigade!’  
 Was there a man dismay’d?  
 Not tho’ the soldier knew  
 Some one had blunder’d:  
 Theirs not to make reply,  
 Theirs not to reason why,  
 Theirs but to do & die,  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them  
 Volley’d & thunder’d;  
 Storm’d at with shot and shell,  
 Boldly they rode and well,  
 Into the jaws of Death,  
 Into the mouth of Hell  
 Rode the six hundred.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” stanzas 2–3, transcribed from Tennyson’s handwritten composition of 1854, available online at <http://www.nationalcenter.org/ChargeoftheLightBrigade.html>. First published in *The Examiner*, 9 December 1854; later in Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Poems*, annotated by Alfred, Lord Tennyson;

Just as Balaclava in October, 1854, so was Houston in 1979. Actually, there were some differences. Conservatives did have the majority following, but they held neither the high ground nor the denominational leadership. In March 1967, a young lawyer named Paul Pressler, a layman from Second Baptist Church in Houston, with a hankering to assist conservative students and causes, visited New Orleans Seminary where my wife and I were students. Informed by a mutual friend that he should meet me because we shared similar commitments and concerns, Paul and Nancy Pressler appeared at our door in Willingham Manor about 10 o'clock one evening. Weary of study, I suggested a trip to Café du Monde for coffee and beignets.

Ah, the stuff of legend! But the truth is that no big plan was hatched that evening. We doubtless became weightier in thought, friendship, and unfortunately, body, but little more. But as the friendship developed, so also the meager plan evolved from a paltry Galapagos finch to a full-blown homo sapien! Here are the basic conclusions that we deduced:

1. All previous attempts at reform had failed. We had to determine why.
2. We had to do our homework. We had to know the bylaws of the convention and use them effectively.
3. We knew that our people were suspicious that the emperor had no clothes, notwithstanding his protests to the contrary. We had to find some courageous souls who would point this out.
4. Education about the actual state of the SBC, as well as on how it functioned, had to be begun and vigorously pressed.
5. Once education progressed, churches had to be convinced to elect and send to the convention each year every allowable messenger.<sup>2</sup>
6. Potential presidents, who enjoyed appointive powers, had to be protected, and kept as long as possible at arm's length from the organizers of the effort.<sup>3</sup>
7. Patience was essential. The whole process would need ten years.<sup>4</sup>

ed. Hallam, Lord Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1908), 2:225–27.

<sup>2</sup>No church is allowed more than ten voting delegates (called “messengers”). Most, however, were eligible for that many, but often no one but the pastor and his wife attended. That practice had to change.

<sup>3</sup>This effort fooled no one. Every attentive Baptist knew that Adrian Rogers, Bailey Smith, Jimmy Draper, Edwin Young, Charles Stanley, Jerry Vines, etc. were one with the conservative renaissance. But because denominational press was unable to trace any of these men to organizational meetings, they received a measure of protection from the scathing rebukes aimed at the organizers.

<sup>4</sup>This was figured based on the fact that it would take ten years to change the trustee boards of the institutions and agencies of the convention. Also, sustaining any conflict for more than ten years is virtually impossible, as America learned painfully in Vietnam. But the idea of ten years turned out to be laughable. Mistakes and setbacks were not accurately

Southern Baptists enjoyed one distinctive advantage that many sister denominations could not boast. Few places on earth provide a structure as thoroughly democratic as that developed by Southern Baptists. Churches are autonomous and more often than not operate with congregational church government.<sup>5</sup> In turn, congregations elect to participate in local associations of churches (usually geographical), in state Baptist associations, and in the nationwide assembly called the Southern Baptist Convention. A single congregation may choose to have fellowship with any or all of these entities. But two concepts are sacred. First, there is no “connectionalism”; and second, while local, state, and national associations are themselves autonomous, under no circumstance does any one of these entities exercise authority over the local congregation. This fierce, robust doctrine of autonomy, while often dangerous if not pinned tightly to biblical mandates, is ultimately what made possible a grassroots referendum in the SBC. In the end, the bigwigs in the SBC—in any generation—bear little resemblance to the bishops of lesser or greater hierarchical churches. They are nothing more than servants with cuff links, luxurious ties, and somewhat overstated titles like the President of Southwestern Seminary.

This loose confederation of churches bound together by common doctrine, passionate purpose, and a unified means of voluntary support has been, even as at this moment, proven fragile.<sup>6</sup> But as fragile as it may be, the results are frequently an astonishment for other fellowships. This is most often noticed on the missions level where the national entity supports more than 5,000 missionaries, who are entirely funded by the SBC, rather than their being burdened to raise their own support. The other venue noted by many is the support of students in the six Southern Baptist seminaries, who receive essentially half the cost of their training.

Governing boards for all SBC entities are selected as follows. Messengers to the annual meeting of the SBC elect a president. The president appoints a Committee on Committees, a layperson and a pastor from each SBC state. This Committee on Committees has only one critical function, the appointment of a Committee on Nominations consisting also of a layperson and a pastor from each state. The Committee on Nominations

calculated. The renaissance took twenty years. Therein is the most astonishing fact of the conservative movement. The people and churches remained constant and dedicated to the task for twenty years.

<sup>5</sup>The advent of “elder rule,” either of a single prominent pastor or an oligarchy of elders following something of a Presbyterian model, has emerged in recent years. There are even a few cases now of churches ruled by a board of directors, some of whom may not even be members. In defense of such moves, many of these arose due to the absurdities and embarrassments generated by an abusive, selfish, and godless form of congregationalism developed in many congregations and characterized by the “monthly business meeting” and the hegemony of “bylaws.” Advocates of the new departures seem ignorant or unconcerned that, if widely successful, the “cure” will be worse for Baptist futures than the disease.

<sup>6</sup>The doctrinal agreement is *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. The purpose is somehow to get the saving gospel of Christ to all nations. The means (in its cooperative expression) is known as the Cooperative Program.

nominates all trustees for the various SBC entities and the following year recommends these to the SBC for election. The convention in session elects these trustees.<sup>7</sup>

Judge Paul Pressler, brilliant, optimistic, and a student of grassroots politics, led a coterie of pastors and laymen, who canvassed to find in each state a pastor and layman who had both sufficient courage and profound conviction and a willingness to promote the necessary educational efforts and strategic attendance at the annual conventions. A major objective each year was to elect a president who endorsed the concept of biblical inerrancy and who understood the issue and the plan.<sup>8</sup> Assuming that each president made wise appointments, it would take only six years to gain ascendancy on the boards and ten years to have boards consisting only of those committed to the inerrancy of Scripture and other conservative causes.

Conservatives had multiple concerns. In addition to the issue of the reliability of the biblical text, there were uncertainties about where some denominational leaders and professors stood on the nature of the atonement, creation, the resurrection of Christ, abortion, the sanctity of marriage, and a host of other issues. However, early in the contest the decision was made to focus on only one issue. That decision was the most strategic one made by conservatives. Other issues would not be avoided and would be addressed whenever they arose naturally, but only one issue, i.e., the inerrancy of the Bible, would take center stage. There were three essential reasons for this. First, conservatives believed that all issues resolved ultimately into epistemological issues. How does one know for certain the truth of that which he chooses to espouse? The confidence that God had spoken in special revelation—in Christ and in the Bible—provided abundant hope that orthodox doctrine could be ferreted out from the study of Scripture.

Second, the issue of the nature of the Bible was understood by most Southern Baptists. Stop the average Baptist on the streets of Liberal, Kansas, and ask him, “Is the Bible true?” His answer would likely be, “Of course. Is there anyone who does not know that?” Third, by focusing primarily on one issue, moderates would have less wiggle room and would encounter greater difficulty in fogging denominational air. This proved to be the most strategic

<sup>7</sup>The genius of this system is that it provides the president of the convention with significant but strictly limited impact on the direction of the convention. In addition to the six seminaries, the entities include the Executive Committee, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, LifeWay (the publishing arm), and GuideStone (the retirement and insurance arm).

<sup>8</sup>These presidents, beginning in 1979, were Adrian Rogers (1979), Bailey Smith (1980–1981), James T. Draper (1982–1983), Charles Stanley (1984–1985), Adrian Rogers (1986–1987), Jerry Vines (1988–1989), Morris Chapman (1990–1991), H. Edwin Young (1992–1993), Jim Henry (1994–1995), Tom Elliff (1996–1997), Paige Patterson (1998–1999), James Merritt (2000–2001), Jack Graham (2002–2003), Bobby Welch (2004–2005), Frank S. Page (2006–2007), and Johnny Hunt (2008–2009). These calculations are based on the election years of each. Rogers, for example, was elected in 1979 but presided over the 1980 convention.



decision made. As Adrian Rogers classically opined, "Make them argue with the Bible."<sup>9</sup>

### Educational Advance

The educational advance was a multi-pronged effort. First came various kinds of publications and circulated white papers. *The Southern Baptist Advocate* became the principal mouthpiece of the movement, though there were also other regionally popular journals. Russell Kaemmerling, whose ministry would later suffer tragedy, was the editor for most of the paper's life. Moderates soon greatly feared him as a keen investigative reporter.

In 1980, Russ Bush and Tom Nettles published *Baptists and the Bible*.<sup>10</sup> The SBC denominational press refused to publish the book, but Moody Press agreed to make it available. The volume was devastating to the moderate cause because it demonstrated that while there were some liberal Baptists, the vast majority of Baptist leaders always endorsed the full reliability of the Bible. Try as they might, the moderates could not counter both the logic and the historiography of Bush and Nettles. Both professors at Southwestern Seminary at the time, these men encountered no small hostility from faculty and administration.

Other books, too numerous to mention, were published. Just one other, relatively unknown now, merits special mention. Robison James, liberal professor at the University of Richmond, proposed three debates, two public and one private, after which a book would be issued entitled *Beyond the Impasse*, which would establish an ideological compromise exhibited by four theologians on each side of the theological divide.<sup>11</sup> Ostensibly, this would set the stage for a convention compromise. The two public debates were held at the University of Richmond and at Southern Seminary. The private discussion held at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama, was recorded by LifeWay. Edited by David Dockery and Robison James, who were opposing participants, moderates were also represented by John P. Newport of Southwestern Seminary; Walter Harrelson of Vanderbilt; and Molly Marshall, then a professor at Southern Seminary and now president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Shawnee, Kansas. Conservatives included R. Albert Mohler, then the editor of *The Georgia Baptist Index*; Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School; and Paige Patterson, then the president of Criswell College in Dallas, Texas.

<sup>9</sup>Roughly commensurate with this effort in the SBC was the organization of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, which did its work from 1977 to 1989. This organization contributed substantively, especially through its publications to the conservative renaissance in the SBC.

<sup>10</sup>L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. and expan. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

<sup>11</sup>Robison B. James and David S. Dockery, eds., *Beyond the Impasse? Scripture, Interpretation, and Theology in Baptist Life* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992).

The value of the volume was that for the first time interested parties could view the perspectives in the format of more recent volumes written from a contrasting position. Further, John Newport was comfortable with neither group and consequently was of little assistance to the moderates. When it became apparent that the positions intensely endorsed in the book were irreconcilable, Robison James suggested that publication be abandoned. Knowing that the debate had not gone well for moderates, conservatives pointed to the publishing contract. However, the title was admittedly misleading since the impasse had not been bridged, but had expanded. Therefore, they suggested that the problem be resolved with the addition of an interrogative to the title. The title became a question, answered helpfully by the book.

Another approach was an attempt to survey relatively current literary contributions from professors related to the institutions of Southern Baptists. In the midst of the controversy, Paige Patterson released a white paper entitled "Evidences." These citations were from neo-orthodox and liberal professors teaching in state and national Baptist institutions. The effort might have had little effect if it had not been for Presnall Wood of the *Baptist Standard* of Texas who saw the paper and responded, citing some of the evidences and alleging that the authors in question had been taken out of context. Wood alleged,

The April 23 editorial of the *Standard* called on Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas to name the names of a "a very large contingency in significant denominational posts" who do not in fact any longer believe that the Bible is totally true and do not hold to the faith of Baptist founding fathers.

President Patterson has responded, and a rather extensive news article appears on pages 5, 8, 9 of this issue of the *Standard*. Since some of these charges against some of those named had been made in some of the meetings of the nationally organized group, it is well that the names are made public in order that any Southern Baptist can know and evaluate the charges. It is helpful for the agenda of the charges to move from the general to the specific.<sup>12</sup>

The effect was to create an appetite to view both "Evidences" and the books from which the citations had been plucked. Conservatives sold quite a number of heterodox books that probably would have had little audience otherwise. Just to provide a few examples, note the following from the pen of Glenn Hinson:

<sup>12</sup>Presnall Wood, "Serious Charges," in *The Baptist Standard*, 14 May 1980, 6.

Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus expected the return of the Son of Man and the consummation to occur within his own lifetime (Mark 13:30). His “error” was due to prophetic foreshortening. So urgent was his sense of mission, it seemed as if God had to consummate his kingdom immediately.<sup>13</sup>

In a separate volume, Hinson came to this conclusion:

The conclusion leaves me with mixed feelings about the applicability of my findings to the church today. Negative sentiments arise out of the way in which early Christianity narrowly defined the boundaries for God’s people. Its expansion was related to an exclusivism and intolerance to which I could not subscribe. Early Christianity grew for the same basic reasons that conservative American churches are now growing. If my thesis is correct, the major ecclesiastical and theological forms had much to do with inculcating and conserving this spirit, helping continually to motivate the Empire-wide effort. Indeed, they figured prominently in inciting the effort to enlist not only non-Christians but others who claimed to be Christians—schismatics, heretics, and others. Did the covenant have to be so narrowly defined and applied through Christianity’s institutional life?

Today, it would appear, the covenant and thus the mission of the church could be defined with a greater measure of tolerance. This would not necessitate an abandonment of monotheism nor the conviction that some sort of special revelation occurred through Israel and Christ and the church. It might necessitate, however, the acknowledgement that the one God has disclosed himself in particular ways through other cultures and religions besides these.<sup>14</sup>

Temp Sparkman at Midwestern Seminary concluded that children reared in faith needed no repentance:

Our children, truly reared in the faith, do not need to throw off the old life of sin and take on the new life of faith. They have, all along, been choosing faith over sin and choosing sin over faith, and will continue to do so throughout their lives.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, *Jesus Christ* (Wilmington, NC: McGrath, 1977), 76. Hinson was a professor of church history.

<sup>14</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), 287.

<sup>15</sup>G. Temp Sparkman, *The Salvation and Nurture of the Child of God: The Story of Emma* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1983), 25. Sparkman was a professor of Christian education.

Fisher Humphreys of New Orleans Seminary just could not believe that vicarious punishment was either moral or meaningful:

Men today do not ordinarily hold this view of God as simply willing right and wrong, and so they cannot believe that vicarious punishment is either meaningful or moral. No illustration can be given, so far as I can tell, which makes vicarious punishment morally credible to men today. The stories of one soldier punished for another, a child punished for his brother, a man punished for his friend, may be morally praiseworthy from the point of view of the substitute, but they never are acceptable from the point of view of the punisher. It always seems morally outrageous that any judge would require a substitute. However noble the substitute's act might be, the judge's act seems despicable.<sup>16</sup>

Frank Eakin of the University of Richmond broke up the Egyptian army in a shallow bog:

When the J source and the Miriam couplet (Ex. 15:21) are juxtaposed, a probable event unfolds. The Hebrews fleeing Egypt were pursued by the Egyptians using chariots. When the Hebrews confronted a shallow body of water, a strong east wind blew back the water in a ready, shallow area, permitting the Hebrews to cross. When the Egyptians sought to follow, their chariots were too heavy and bogged down. As the horses attempted to pull free, some of the Egyptians were thrown into the shallow water and mud. In the confusion some Egyptians died.<sup>17</sup>

C.W. Christian of Baylor opted for Darwin and against being bound in any way by the Bible:

The disparity between Genesis and Darwin, if it comes down to it, has really been decided for all of us in Darwin's favor. If the Scriptures are not then reliable in matters scientific, how can they be trusted in other matters? Furthermore, scientific ("critical") study of the Scriptures has made clear the very human quality of the Bible itself, and has shown the rather surprising variety of outlook, witness, opinion and theology to be found in the Bible. What does this say about its authority? If indeed this book is shot-through with humanity, how can it be relied on as a testimony to faith and a source of doctrine?

<sup>16</sup>Fisher Humphreys, *The Death of Christ* (Nashville: Broadman, 1978), 61. Humphreys was a professor of theology.

<sup>17</sup>Frank Eakin, Jr., "The Plague and Crossing of the Sea," *Review and Expositor* 74 (Fall 1977), 478. Eakin was a professor of religion.

And one cannot begin to understand the clearly provable inadequacies of Scripture scientifically and historically, or its peculiar richness and power to move men to worship and to repentance unless he takes this purpose seriously.

But to the question, “Are we bound by the Bible?” we must also answer “No,” for within the dialogue of faith are other sources of insight which we must hear. Our theology is not exclusively biblical theology, even if we formally hold to an exclusive biblical authority, because we continually measure, test, and select from biblical insights in the light of the belief of the church and in the light of our experience.<sup>18</sup>

Another method of creating awareness was the *Heart of America Bible Conferences*. Staged in Saint Louis, Louisville, and elsewhere, these conferences brought together some of the best known Southern Baptist pastors to address why they endorsed the inerrancy of the Bible and why they were convinced that Southern Baptists as a whole needed to do the same. The Criswell College, in cooperation with evangelist James Robison, sponsored these events. Later Robison left the movement and became a Charismatic television preacher. But these conferences, plus the annual Pastors’ Conference immediately prior to the meeting of the SBC and the School of the Prophets at First Baptist, Dallas, became rallies for Ma and Pa Baptist to hear their favorite preachers expound these verities.

A feminist sociologist unsympathetic to the conservative cause actually wrote one of the most important accounts of the conservative renaissance. In her work *Baptist Battles*, Nancy Ammerman is one of the few to note the significant role of the pulpit. “The most natural form of communication among Southern Baptists is, of course, the pulpit. And in the medium, as we have noted, fundamentalists excelled.”<sup>19</sup>

Another publication, *In the Name of the Father* composed by Carl Kell and L. Raymond Camp, focuses on the rhetoric of conservative Southern Baptist preachers, concluding that the conservative cause triumphed primarily because of the persuasiveness of their pulpits. The authors even appended

<sup>18</sup>C.W. Christian, *Shaping Your Faith: A Guide to a Personal Theology* (Waco, TX: Word, 1973), 67, 70, 81. Christian was a professor of religion.

<sup>19</sup>Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 181–82. Ammerman is notable for her evenhandedness and scholarly distancing. She is not always fair, but conservatives generally rejoiced in her research more than moderates. Patterson reviewed it for *Christianity Today* (see Appendix A). When protests fell on *Christianity Today* like West Texas hail, Ammerman herself replied with a letter to the editor affirming the accuracy of the review. Another similar monograph, *Uneasy in Babylon* by Baylor professor Barry Hankins, made a concerted effort to be evenhanded, but like Ammerman discovered much greater sociological impetus than is warranted. The “battle” was theological in nature. Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, Religion and American Culture Series (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002).

the full text of Jerry Vines' famous sermon, "A Baptist and His Bible," as a prime example of conservative preaching.<sup>20</sup>

As the thermometer in the Baptist kitchen climbed to unprecedented levels, the ensconced moderate leadership of the SBC felt increasing discomfort. Initial efforts simply to quash the belligerent and bellicose country cousins, who were supposed to have remained in their churches and to have funneled money upline, were unsuccessful. A series of efforts to placate the implacable were launched. For example, in the winter of 1982, *Review and Expositor*, then the journal of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, featured "Fundamentalism and the Southern Baptist Convention." Charles Allen, a graduate of Southern who was at that time a Ph.D. student at the University of Chicago, submitted an article entitled "Paige Patterson: Contender for Baptist Sectarianism."

Allen was a high school student in Fayetteville, Arkansas, when I first knew him. Unquestionably one of the most brilliant youths I had ever encountered, he nonetheless had some profoundly troubling personal issues, which he brought to me as his pastor. The *Review and Expositor* article contained considerable critique and analysis with which the subject of the article was less than ecstatic. Nonetheless, Allen's analysis was much more hospitable than the treatment that I had come to expect. Allen also wrote an appendix to the article, which the seminary refused to publish. In it, Allen attributed to his former pastor the fact that he was married and the father of children. He further indicated that while his own beliefs were now considerably different than Patterson's, he knew that this was a matter of personal grief to Patterson—and sometimes even to Allen.<sup>21</sup>

Eleven years later, the same publication actually asked Patterson to provide an article entitled "My Vision for the Twenty-First Century SBC."<sup>22</sup> President Roy Lee Honeycutt was kind enough to publish the article but only with an addendum attempting to set the record straight on an issue with a member of the faculty. Nevertheless, the article was published, and once again the contrast of two positions vying for the hearts of Southern Baptists became ever clearer.

## Two Events

Toward the conclusion of the open conflict, two events occurred with devastating effects on the moderate counterinsurgency, even though one was orchestrated by moderate leadership. The first was the report of the Peace Committee and, the second, the issuance of the Glorieta Statement by the six

<sup>20</sup>Carl L. Kell and L. Raymond Camp, *In the Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 131–45.

<sup>21</sup>Charles W. Allen, "Paige Patterson: Contender for Baptist Sectarianism," *Review and Expositor* 79 (Winter, 1982): 105–20. Appendix B includes the banned conclusion to Allen's article, which he sent to me.

<sup>22</sup>*Review and Expositor* 88 (Winter 1991): 46.

SBC seminary presidents. June 11–13, 1985, unveiled the granddaddy of all SBC gatherings in Dallas, Texas. An incredible 45,519 messengers clogged highways leading to the convention center, prompting a helicopter traffic reporter to opine, “What the Democratic and Republican National Conventions failed to do, Southern Baptists have done—we have terminal gridlock on Dallas freeways.” W. A. Criswell delivered to the Pastors’ Conference his now famous message, “Whether We Live or Die.”<sup>23</sup> Charles Stanley was reelected to a second term in the largest vote ever taken by Southern Baptists. Tensions were high, arguments frequent, and, reverting to their early twentieth-century style, there were at least two scuffles among the saints. Somehow, the proposal of former convention president Franklin Paschal for a Peace Committee seemed appropriate, even if the committee had about the same possibilities for a peaceful conclusion as a chance meeting between a Cape Buffalo and a male lion.

Such a committee was the last possible hope for moderates and, therefore, not enthusiastically welcomed by conservatives, who understood political compromise only too well. To make matters worse, conservatives were able to place some of their strongest voices on the tribunal, but so the moderates did as well, and the majority on the panel was made up of what one conservative liked to call “the great unwashed.” Conservatives were not greatly encouraged when the final report came two years later in June, 1987, in St. Louis. When the full report arrived, discouraged conservatives met on Monday night to discuss it. There was talk of opposing the report. One conservative, remembering Gideon with Purah, his servant, and their reconnaissance mission to the camp of Midian, suggested that it was a good idea to sample opposition reaction and insisted that conservatives go to the moderates’ coffee gatherings and listen (Jdg 7:10). “They hate the report” was one conservative’s report, and that clearly became the consensus. The next day, the convention overwhelmingly adopted the report. The moderate collapse was almost a *fait accompli*. Pressler reports the key results of the report:

It is the conclusion of the majority of the Peace Committee that the cause of peace within the Southern Baptist Convention will be greatly enhanced by the affirmation of the whole Bible as being not errant in any area of reality.

Therefore we exhort the trustees and administrators of our seminaries and other agencies affiliated with or supported by the Southern Baptist Convention to faithfully discharge their responsibility to carefully preserve the doctrinal integrity of our institutions receiving our support, and only employ professional staff who believe in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and that the Bible is truth without any mixture of error.

<sup>23</sup>Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000). Sutton says that Criswell told him that the sermon was the most important message he ever preached (147).

They then found as follows:

We, as a Peace Committee, have found that most Southern Baptists see truth without any mixture of error for its matter, as meaning, for example, that

1. They believe in direct creation of mankind and therefore they believe Adam and Eve were real persons.
2. They believe the named authors did indeed write the biblical books attributed to them by those books.
3. They believe the miracles described in Scripture did indeed occur as supernatural events in history.
4. They believe that the historical narratives given by biblical authors are indeed accurate and reliable as given by those authors.

They then issued this charge:

We call upon Southern Baptist institutions to recognize the number of Southern Baptists who believe this interpretation of our confessional statement and, in the future, to build their professional staffs and faculties from those who clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large.<sup>24</sup>

Pressler reports that “Paige supported its formation [that of the Peace Committee] much more than I did,” and intimated that I had greater faith than he.<sup>25</sup> The truth is that Pressler almost always surpassed me in faith, confidence, and optimism. In fact, when anyone asked Richard Land how things were going in the convention, he would respond, “Ask Patterson and Pressler. The truth will be halfway between the dark foreboding of Patterson and the unrealistically sunny optimism of Pressler.” There is a sense in which Adrian Rogers, Jerry Vines, Charles Stanley, W. A. Criswell, Jimmy Draper, Bailey Smith, and others were essential to the return of the convention to the faith of the founding fathers, but any rendition of the story that did not grant primary focus to the layman, Judge Paul Pressler, would be hopelessly misleading.

The addition of an outside parliamentarian is also noteworthy. Attempting to have a town hall meeting with anywhere from 8,000 to 45,000 participants requires patience, some special rules, and courage. Few attempt this with groups of any size. In the 1986 convention, President Charles Stanley, challenged by a lawsuit from Robert S. Crowder, called an organization

<sup>24</sup>Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 138–39.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 272.



of professional parliamentarians and asked for the best. That person turned out to be a Christian Church minister, Barry McCarty. McCarty recognized the challenge and took to it like a polar bear to an ice float. First in the convention of 1986, and until today, McCarty has skillfully guided presidents through the convoluted maneuverings of such town meetings. Any assessment of the conservative strategy and triumph would be incomplete without recognizing the genius of Charles Stanley's decision and the sure and sane leadership of a Christian Church preacher and professor.

One final event, perhaps the most bizarre of all, must be chronicled. When the Peace Committee convened a meeting on October 20–22, 1986, at the Baptist Conference Center in Glorieta, New Mexico, part of the purpose was to meet for prayer with the agency heads, including the six seminary presidents, four of whom were moderate to liberal with William Crews of Golden Gate and Landrum Leavell of New Orleans relatively quiet conservatives. By this time it had become obvious to almost everyone in Southern Baptist life that the six seminaries were the chief bone lodged in the Southern Baptist trachea. Consequently, sensitive to growing pressure, the six presidents decided to issue a statement, which, in part, declared,

We believe that the Bible is fully inspired; it is “God breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), utterly unique. No other book or collection of books can justify that claim. The sixty-six books of the Bible are not errant in any area of reality. We hold to their infallible power and binding authority.<sup>26</sup>

To assess the reaction of both conservative and moderates to this declaration is not so difficult. But to say which coterie was the more stunned lies beyond my ability. I will not soon forget the look on the face of Milton Ferguson (president at Midwestern Seminary) when I shared with him that I could not have signed the statement since grammar is part of “reality.” I did not think grammar had to be perfect to be a carriage for inerrant truth. The faculties at Midwestern, Southern, Southeastern, and, to some degree, Southwestern were furious with their presidents, certain that the presidents had bequeathed the family farm to the fundamentalist country cousins. Conservatives, on the other hand, found the statement totally inconsistent with practices at most of the seminaries.

Whatever the reactions, the tide now turned decisively in favor of conservatives. Within a short time, five of the six seminary presidents had resigned, retired, or been released. Only an inerrantist, William Crews at Golden Gate Seminary, remained. All six seminaries now had boards with a majority of conservatives, presidents who endorsed the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, and within their faculties growing contingencies who had the same commitments. Soon every agency of the convention had named conservative

<sup>26</sup>“The Glorieta Statement of the Seminary Presidents,” in Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation*, 166.

leaders, and gradually even the editors of state paper news distribution began to change. A long, complicated, difficult—and often painful—safari was in sight of the home from which it had wandered far.

## Appendix A

***Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention.* By Nancy Tatom Ammerman. Rutgers University Press, 1990. 388 pages. Softcover, \$23.95.**

The most unfortunate aspect of *Baptist Battles* is that it will not make its author a millionaire. If only this sociological evaluation of Southern Baptist life could sell 5 million copies—Rutgers would be astonished, Ammerman would be basking at Club Med in Phuket, and I would be ecstatic!

A brilliant sociologist teaching in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Nancy Ammerman is a self-confessed Southern Baptist moderate and feminist. She was a prominent participant in the August meeting of moderates in Atlanta that sought ways of stifling the conservative resurgence in Southern Baptist life.

The author's purpose is to demonstrate that the divisions within Southern Baptist life reflect "deep cultural divisions separating people who have responded differently to that cultural change." So, why would I, an ardent advocate of this conservative resurgence, volunteer my services as manager of sales and promotion to Rutgers University Press? My spirit of volunteerism is even more curious in light of the inaccuracies and misrepresentations of conservatives and their views that crop up occasionally in the book.

Neither Sherlock Holmes nor Jessica Fletcher will be required to resolve this curiosity. Astonishingly, Ammerman's research reveals that just about every concern that conservative Southern Baptists have voiced over the last 30 years is justified!

Consider the following admissions to which Ammerman is driven by her research: 1) The national bureaucracy in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) had become totally pervasive by 1978, with the staffs and trustees of the agencies and institutions overwhelmingly moderate in their sympathies. 2) Even today the vast majority of Southern Baptists are conservatives. 3) Moderates in the SBC tend to be more liberal than their conservative counterparts on ethical issues, with many moderates imbibing alcohol and even swearing. 4) Moderates attach less importance to evangelism and "soul winning" than do conservatives. 5) Moderates in Southern Baptist life are almost exclusively from a white-collar, professional, elitist class, while conservatives are broadly distributed among all kinds of peoples. 6) Influential moderates tend to be from large, historic churches, whereas conservative leadership emerges from a coalition of the smaller churches and the so-called super-churches. 7) During the fifties and sixties, conservative pastors were isolated and excluded from channels of leadership in the denomination.

Concerning the denomination's educational coterie, Ammerman says, "It is little wonder that the Convention's colleges and seminaries had created both the ideology and the social networks, both the sources of meaning and belonging, out of which the old establishment was constructed. They

were largely responsible for the changes in belief fundamentalists sought to oppose. Our statistical testing . . . confirmed what fundamentalists already knew—their foremost enemy was the denomination’s education system” (163).

The mystery is solved. What conservatives have known and alleged is now documented and rehearsed, not from a conservative pen, but from an honest, forthright moderate. With all of its warts and foibles, the conservative resurgence seems more than justified in its efforts given these admissions.

Ammerman also points to certain conservative advantages in the 12-year struggle, which have been largely unnoticed even by seasoned observers. First, the vast superiority of conservatives in the pulpit has given them more than just a leg up in a preaching-oriented denomination. Second, Ammerman notes the overwhelmingly adopted statement of the Peace Committee as effectively authenticating the claims of conservatives. Also, her research suggesting that 88 percent of all Southern Baptists are either self-identified fundamentalists, fundamentalist-conservatives, or conservatives, as compared with only 17 percent moderate-conservatives or self-identified moderates, is probably the most accurate assessment to date.

The book has its mistakes, but most of these are unrelated to the author’s research. The errors usually occur when she shifts to her own opinions or chronicles the usual rhetoric concerning such demonstrably false accusations as conservative mass busing of voters of the allegations that conservatives attempt to undermine individual freedom.

Ammerman stooped to the reporting of moderate paranoia about classroom lectures being clandestinely taped and then shipped off to Dallas. But this is the worst of it: Ammerman does not succeed in her purpose of demonstrating that the current controversy arises out of cultural differences. But the book is still invaluable.

Every “movement conservative” in the Southern Baptist fellowship should purchase two copies of this book. Read one and mark it carefully. It will prove extraordinarily helpful. Give the other copy to a confused Baptist whose theology tends to be orthodox but for whatever reasons has aligned himself with the moderates. If he can still waltz with the moderates after reading this book, then let the orchestra play!

Paige Patterson

Originally published in *Christianity Today*, 35 (Jan 14, 1991): 33–35.

## Appendix B

The following is the appendix in Charles W. Allen's paper, "Paige Patterson: Contender for Baptist Sectarianism, *Fides Quaerens Superare*."

### Paige Patterson: An Appreciation

Every once in a while, especially when writing applications that require a biographical sketch, I will stumble on a few memories that shock me with the realization that I did actually do some thinking before Paige Patterson. I have little problem recalling what I was like in the seventh or eighth grade, but the closer I get to my junior year in high school—the year Paige came to be our pastor—the harder it is to recall favorite ideas, hobbies, feelings, and so on. I think it is because I was on the way to a set of values when suddenly I switched directions and started toward another set. So much of my character then is hard to recall because it got rearranged before it could take. After Paige came, I woke up. Either I became a young adult soon afterward, or I haven't yet, but I found a vocation that so far hasn't let me down, and for that Paige is largely responsible.

We wanted a pastor who would get all our college students back, but we never got them back. What we got was Paige Patterson, and who can say what I or close to thirty other people near my age would be doing now? It probably wouldn't be ministry. I know it wouldn't be in my case.

It's hard to say, because high school students, like theologians, are always a little unrealistic, but I at least thought I was just about through with Southern Baptists, and maybe Christianity too. Then we got this evangelistic pastor, and I knew I would be leaving soon—and decided to tell him why. So I dropped by one Sunday afternoon and stayed for five years—talking with and learning from my friend and mentor.

Through Paige I came to recognize what the grace of God was, who Jesus Christ is, and what both were making out of me. Not that my conversion hadn't been genuine enough for an eight-year-old and a re-dedicated ten-year-old, but my real awakening took place at sixteen. Paige was the one who pointed out that my hermeneutic—accept the Bible when you like what it says, reject it when you don't—left something to be desired. He made me realize that wanting to know the truth was more important than trying to prove you already know it—especially when you pray. And he showed me that evangelism was only sharing Good News, and that I could do it too, if I would. Some of the best experiences of my life have come out of sharing Christ with someone else, and why for the life of me I don't do it more often now, I can't explain except by foolishness. Paige still does, and often—and I envy him.

Despite our theological differences now—and they are many and serious—I still feel an unpayable debt to him. He made me grow up, and sometimes I grieve over not turning out exactly as he had hoped. I suppose I still

nourish the hope that some day we will both have grown to the point where he will like what I will have become. In the meantime I can only alternate between criticism and praise, following the lessons he taught me then as I can best apply them to today. But we still call each other friends.

Paige made himself available to young people through many varied means. When he first came he taught our training union for one quarter, teaching us about personal evangelism through role-playing and finally through sending us out in pairs one night. He vigorously supported starting a coffee-house ministry in Fayetteville, in an area where most of the bars were located, and encouraged us to become involved with people who really weren't our kind. When several of us dedicated our lives to Christian ministry, he instituted a Saturday morning session for us, appropriately called "Table Talk." There I first learned such terms as "existentialism," "demythologizing," "eschatology," "logical positivism," "linguistic analysis," "neo-orthodoxy," "evangelical," "process philosophy," "JEDP," "Q," and so on. For high school and college students, that made us sound pretty sophisticated. Paige also started a Thursday night Bible study for college students in his home, where we often stayed until quite late. He and Dorothy also accompanied us on each of our four mission tours. (By the way, Dorothy could always hold her own in a theological discussion, and sometimes she had to correct Paige.) All of this is to say that his interest in us was obvious, and bonds of love and friendship quickly developed.

So now when I criticize him, it hurts us both. It hurts me because what I am actually criticizing is a period in my life which I can never disown. It hurts Paige because he had high hopes for me to become a major theologian who would help defend conservative evangelicalism. I still confess to having high hopes myself, but I got them because Paige first believed in me. Of course, part of me is compelled to criticize, too—again, I think, because we were so close.

What I would like people to come away with after reading this, is a perception of the man that differs from one they might get just from reading *The Shophar* or various news releases. Probably no one can be reduced to labels, and I am most acutely aware of this when I think of Paige. Somehow, despite all the legitimate objections to his theology and behavior, I still wish everyone could *like* him.

## *To Rejoice or Not—An Assessment*

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Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,  
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;  
Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease Him,  
And He turn away His wrath from him  
(Prov 24:17-18, NKJV).

There are nobler reasons for this prohibition than that stated in the last words. But as it stands, the author reveals his knowledge of the character of the God he serves. Of course, there is a fine line between rejoicing in victory, especially if God-given, and stepping across that razor thin line to celebrating another's loss. Every moderate arraying himself against the conservatives in what Glenna Whitley, writing in *D Magazine*, styled the "Baptist Holy War," is the object of God's love and compassionate longsuffering no less than conservatives.<sup>1</sup> Who could construe rejoicing over the sorrow of one who is the object of God's love as healthy action?

While I do believe that the reality of human sin demands acceptance of the concept of a just war, I, nevertheless, cannot imagine a genuine follower of Christ as a warmonger. There was never a war without agonizing pain, incalculable loss, wrenching sorrow, and devastating heartbreak. Religious conflicts may not maim the physical body, though that has also happened, but spiritual and emotional injury can be even more traumatic. I did and do rejoice over the return of Southern Baptists to a biblical theology and Christian worldview. But that rejoicing always has to be tempered sternly with an understanding of the suffering on both sides of the aisle.

When I consider moderate foes, the ever forthright Cecil Sherman, the creative Kenneth Chafin, the gifted Duke McCall, and the amiable Milton Ferguson, I do not feel sorry for them. They and hundreds like them would not wish such condescension.<sup>2</sup> But I do regret profoundly that they, as

<sup>1</sup>Glenna Whitley, "Baptist Holy War," *D Magazine* (January 1991), [http://www.dmagazine.com/Home/1991/01/01/BAPTIST\\_HOLY\\_WAR.aspx](http://www.dmagazine.com/Home/1991/01/01/BAPTIST_HOLY_WAR.aspx). (Accessed 8 April 2010).

<sup>2</sup>Carl L. Kell, ed., *Exiled: Voices of Southern Baptist Convention Holy War* (Knoxville:

well as their wives and children, suffered. Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers were right in what they had to do, but the casualties on both Catholic and Protestant sides surely do not represent what God intended. One, of course, cannot fail to recognize that there are consequences associated with beliefs and behavior. But in the end, we are all reduced to the plea of the malefactor on the cross, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Please permit then the salute of a dying soldier to other noble warriors who fought well though in a different uniform.

Religious wars often divide families. Wayne Ward, cousin to my wife and professor of theology for a lifetime at Southern Seminary, taught a summer class in contemporary theology at New Orleans Seminary. This class remains my favorite above any I ever took. Love has remained in our family, though Ward walked on a different side than the rest of our family. Perhaps while such division is tragic on either side of the divide, I tend to find it more distasteful among those claiming to be people of the book, especially when it involves me.

### Thanksgiving

That said, many were the blessings of God for Southern Baptists. First, six seminaries are now all headed in the same direction just as a plethora of other institutions founded by Bible-loving believers had been virtually lost to the faith and now have been pulled back from the edge of fatal compromise by a free people determined to set the course of the schools they generously supported. Today, I am not aware of a faculty member who questions the inerrancy of the Bible at any of the six seminaries. Wide ranges of interpretation are discernible and debate is sometimes vigorous. But all appear to be orthodox, evangelical, Baptist followers of Christ.

There were two bonuses. In the heat of the controversy, there was little hope of salvaging more than five of the state Baptist colleges and universities. Astonishingly, fifteen or more of these institutions have remained Baptist to the core or have returned to the faith after straying for a brief time. But there was more.

Beginning in September 1962, Luther Rice Seminary opened in Florida. Ahead of its time in various forms of distance education and intensely unpopular among its accredited, more avant-garde sister Baptist seminaries, thousands enrolled across the years. Because LRS was led altogether by men committed to the Bible, she exercised an influence on the conservative revitalization far beyond what her resources would have dictated.

The University of Tennessee Press, 2006). This volume contains a number of testimonies from known and obscure moderates who felt keenly their exodus from Southern Baptist life. Another such volume, which appeared in 1994, contained essays written by disaffected former professors at Southeastern Seminary: Thomas A. Bland Jr., ed. *Servant Songs: Reflections on the History and Mission of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1950-1988* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1994).



In 1969, W. A. Criswell, far-famed pastor at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, established The Criswell Bible Institute, modeled much after Moody Bible Institute. Eventually, the school became The Criswell College. An astonishingly large number of the leaders of the conservative movement in the SBC came from the faculty and graduates of this fledgling college.

In 1971, B. Gray Allison, a widely known professor of evangelism at New Orleans Seminary, led in the establishment of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, located first in Little Rock and then associated with Adrian Rogers and the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, with an extension campus in Schenectady, New York. Well-known for their emphasis on witness and personal evangelism, Mid-America joined with the Criswell College and Luther Rice Seminary to provide for the denomination pastors who did not compromise on the Word of God. Any fair estimate of the conservative renaissance in the SBC would have acknowledged the profound impact of these schools.

In the midst of this controversy, Southern Baptists found themselves suddenly in the bright lights of the national media. With more than 30,000 churches and twelve million confessing members, Southern Baptists had usually operated beneath the radar of the general public. None were prepared to find themselves center stage, and few handled the press well. All of our controversies had taken place beneath the domes of our own tea-pots. Fiery rhetoric and vigorous pulpit-shattering gestures were followed by coffee with the opponents and boisterous laughter about the goldfish with which some teen had seeded the baptistery waters. On the big stage of history, we stumbled often. For example, in 1984 Roy L. Honeycutt preached a sermon at Southern's convocation on "holy war."<sup>3</sup> Within minutes of his conclusion the secular press contacted the president of the Criswell College, then a young man in his mid-thirties, for comment. Instead of simply saying, "I cannot comment. I was not there," the combatant replied that this was simply "another case of denominational fascism." While my reply was neither godly nor in any sense helpful, it meant paychecks for paparazzi and was promptly exhibited in both secular and ecclesiastical media throughout the United States. The letter of apology to Honeycutt, who was less than innocent in this incident, was, of course, carried by only one paper, though copied to many. Hundreds of other examples could be cited, but the point is made with my own faux pas.

This new notoriety was not without significance. As time progressed, so hopefully did wisdom come in handling representatives of the press. Southern Baptists became widely known, and often that was a curse when conservatives were painted with the brush of scrappy pugilists out to return society to the Ordovician era. But there were also remarkable blessings.

<sup>3</sup>Roy L. Honeycutt Jr., "To Your Tents O Israel!" 28 August 1984, "Document 29: Roy Honeycutt's 'Holy War' Convocation Address at Southern Seminary," in *Going for the Jugular: A Documentary History of the SBC Holy War*, ed. Walter B. Shurden and Randy Shepley (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 124-34.

Sometime in the mid-eighties, Michael Bryan called the president of The Criswell College in Dallas, explaining that he had a contract with Random House to write a book on evangelicals for the general public. Bryan confessed that, though he had some good ideas, he did not know these people from the inside. Having noted an article about the president at Criswell College in the Houston paper and charmed by the unassailable fact that the president was a cowboy and of all things that he wore boots every day, Bryan had concluded that this picture was certainly typical of backwoods evangelicals. He could “feel” this book coming together as he asked to come to the college for six months and literally live among the students and professors. Shocked to be immediately granted his request, Bryan informed the college president that he was an atheist and a graduate of Cornell.

Criswell College president Paige Patterson opened the doors of the school, no strings attached. I could attend classes, trustee meetings, prayer meetings, go out with students and professors on their evangelizing assignments, take a mission trip overseas. But there was a catch of sorts. Patterson confided that I would inevitably become a project at the school, “prime meat for the headhunters . . . We have some Green Berets around here,” he announced gleefully. “How will you handle it when you walk into a prayer meeting and twenty people are on their knees praying for your everlasting soul?”<sup>4</sup>

The inside cover of the book prepares the reader for the literary journey to follow.

Fifty million Americans call themselves evangelical Christians—people who believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. Politically, they are known as the religious right. In *Chapter and Verse: A Skeptic Revisits Christianity*, author Mike Bryan, a lapsed Protestant on the religious left, enrolls as a student at Criswell College, a leading evangelical Bible school in Dallas.

What Bryan found there surprised him and will fascinate true believers, agnostics, and even atheists: Criswell was anything but a haven for fundamentalist hypocrites, shysters, or their pathetic dupes. In fact, its students and faculty concur with their less-devoted brethren that the shenanigans of televangelists like Jimmy Swaggart or Jim and Tammy Bakker are an embarrassment to any informed Christian. Instead, what Mike Bryan discovered at Criswell were steadfast, unwavering followers of serious, intelligent religious tenets determined to hold the line against accommodation, be it in the form of “liberal” Christian

<sup>4</sup>Mike Bryan, *Chapter and Verse: A Skeptic Revisits Christianity* (New York: Random House, 1991), back cover.

doctrines, New Age journeys, or burgeoning deism—wherein God is a “warm fuzzy” who makes no demands, leaves us alone, and in the final analysis, doesn’t matter. These religious purists see Jesus Christ as the only true way and light. And pity us for not seeing this light, too.<sup>5</sup>

When Bryan’s volume appeared in 1991, it contained some criticism. But on the whole, the monograph was an endorsement that the Criswell College could not have purchased with millions spent in advertising. Toward the end of the book, Bryan notes,

Then he [Patterson] caught me off-guard and introduced me from the dais. “Mike’s an atheist”—momentarily ashamed, I called out “Agnostic!” by way of correction, and he accepted that—“and I know he won’t mind when we pray for him. He’s a dear person, and many of us have come to love him.”

I was annoyed—with myself. Patterson had caught me off-guard with his “atheist” designation and induced me into the semantic emendation, but he was right. We’re functional atheists, no matter what the polls show. And his sally convinced me of one thing. I’d never attempt to put one over on Paige Patterson. I had always assumed that his unfailing kindness to me during my term at his college was to some extent political. I was writing a book about Criswell College, after all, for a partially secular audience, presumably. Why would he want to antagonize me? But I had never taken his generous and undoctinaire attitude, shared by almost everyone else at the school, as *mainly* calculated. It was a Christian attitude, and it was real. I give myself credit for knowing the difference. I took his introduction of me as the pet atheist at Criswell to be another mark of his irrepressible mischievousness and genuine interest in all folks and their diverse ways—a mark of his personality, not his faith. The same holds true for Danny Akin, Jim Parker, Keith Eitel, and just about everyone else I’ve mentioned in this narrative. One thing I had learned at Criswell: theological dogmatism can be passionately espoused by personalities who are not in the least doctrinaire.

This had puzzled me. I had asked several people at the school why, if they believed I was so wrong in my beliefs I am going to hell, I didn’t feel this condemnation on anything but an intellectual level. Why wouldn’t it interrupt a friendship and, for that matter, the whole flow of living in the wide world in which most of the people encountered would also be going to hell.

Patterson answered me this way: “While there is a clear divide, as far as we are concerned, between those who are saved

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., inside book jacket.

and those who are lost, the clear divide is purely the grace of God. It is no matter of character within us that makes us superior to anybody. We just don't see any big difference, we really don't. We are both sinners who have rebelled against God, and just by His precious grace I happen to be forgiven. I have *accepted* His forgiveness.

'Also, and however falteringly we follow the faith we claim to believe, we do believe that every individual, lost or saved, is the handiwork of God—to get technical, he is the *imago dei*—the image of God. And as such this person is the object of God's most intense love, and that being the case, for me to be anything other than totally accepting, not to reach out to him with every fiber of my own being, would be to deny the faith. It would be failure to extend to others the same kindness and love that God has extended to me.

'One of the things that happens to you in conversion is that there's a fundamental change in your attitude toward people when the Lord moves into your life. You don't any longer see them as the girl who sells you the hamburger or the guy who changes your tires. You see each of them as very precious people, each of who has a fascinating personal story. You get to where it's fun to be with them, see what makes them tick.'<sup>6</sup>

Grateful for the assessment and for both hardback and paper editions of the book, I have to say that the opportunity to attempt in a faltering fashion to show the love of Christ and to speak the gospel of Christ to this man and to many other secularists was to me the most important consequence of the confrontation. In 2003, Bryan published a fascinating novel with Pantheon Books, a division of Random House. The intriguing title of the book is *The Afterword*.<sup>7</sup> The copy he sent to me is inscribed as follows. "To Paige, from a guy who's still trying to get it right! Mike Bryan." As I read the novel, I thought I discerned a man who had become a follower of Jesus. One night over supper in New York City, I asked if I read it right. Mike smiled broadly and changed the subject.

During the convention presidency of Tom Elliff (1996 to 1998), the opportunity arose to accomplish a critical task that conservatives had reserved almost to the end of the contest. The confessional document reflecting Southern Baptists is called the Baptist Faith and Message. As such, the confession was first adopted in 1925 as a revision of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1833.<sup>8</sup> Emended again in 1963, under the direction of denominational leaders and theologians, some of whom leaned toward neo-

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 312-14.

<sup>7</sup>Mike Bryan, *The Afterword* (New York: Pantheon, 2003).

<sup>8</sup>William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1969),

orthodox perspectives, the document was vague to conservatives at several points.

Tom and Jeannie Elliff have a large family and strong convictions about the nature of the family. Elliff had noted the absence of an article on the family in the Baptist Faith and Message. In 1997, Elliff appointed a committee who were charged with bringing an amendment on the family for the convention to approve in 1998.<sup>9</sup> The following amendment was hotly debated at the 1998 convention in Salt Lake City but overwhelmingly passed by the messengers, adding Article XVIII to the confession.

### **Article XVIII. The Family (1998 Amendment)**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

<sup>9</sup>The committee chaired by Anthony Jordan of Oklahoma included Bill Elliff, Richard Land, Mary Mohler, Dorothy Patterson, O.D. "Damon" Shook, and John Sullivan.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.<sup>10</sup>

Just when the secular press found other stories more interesting, the phrase, "A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband," unleashed the press in a manner resembling the eruption of Krakatoa. Dorothy Patterson, who, with committee input and approval, largely penned the commentary provided to the convention participants at the time of the vote, anticipated this, remarking in the commentary:

Doctrine and practice, whether in the home or the church, are not to be determined according to modern cultural, sociological, and ecclesiastical trends or according to personal emotional whims; rather, Scripture is to be the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).<sup>11</sup>

Southern Baptists were back in the news, and seemingly every feminist in the world was on the warpath. Like it or hate it, Southern Baptists were now on record with an article of faith strongly supporting the home. This feat could not have transpired under the old regime and is, therefore, to be understood as a direct product of the conservative renaissance.

The next year in Atlanta, T.C. Pinckney, an Air Force Brigadier General and war hero from Virginia, proposed a motion that the president of the SBC appoint a blue-ribbon committee to revise and update the entire Baptist Faith and Message since this had not been done since 1963.<sup>12</sup> In turn, the recommendations of this committee, brought to the SBC in annual session in Orlando, Florida, were adopted on June 14, 2000.<sup>13</sup> Several factors

<sup>10</sup>Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article XVIII (1998 Amendment).

<sup>11</sup>"Report of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee," in *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Executive Committee, 1998), 81; "Report of Committee on Baptist Faith and Message," (June 1998), [on-line]; accessed 9 April 2010; available from <http://www.utm.edu/staff/caldwell/bfm/1963-1998/report1998.html>; Internet.

<sup>12</sup>President Patterson appointed the following committee: Adrian Rogers (chair), Max Barnett, Steve Gaines, Susie Hawkins, Rudy Hernández, Charles S. Kelley Jr., Heather King, Richard D. Land, Fred Luter, R. Albert Mohler Jr., T.C. Pinckney, Nelson Price, Roger Spradlin, Simon Tsoi, and Jerry Vines.

<sup>13</sup>Two excellent volumes provide analysis of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Charles S. Kelley Jr., Richard D. Land, and R. Albert Mohler Jr., eds., *The Baptist Faith & Message* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2007); and Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell, eds., *Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination*

necessitated revisiting the confession. Most Baptists would agree that truth never changes but the issues confronting society, and even the church, present new challenges to be addressed.

The fact that Southern Baptists began on the wrong side of the slavery issue, accompanied by a tragic history of harboring and perpetuating racism, necessitated a clear statement about the teachings of the Bible regarding race. Statements on both race and gender were added to Article III, "Man." The "openness of God" had become an issue, so Article II, "God," addresses the extent and fullness of God's knowledge. Article VI, "The Church," specifies that pastors will be men. Article XV, "The Christian and the Social Order," addresses the abortion debate by adding a strong affirmation for the sanctity of human life.

Article I, "The Scriptures," represented a major alteration and predictably attracted the most vigorous and prolonged debate. The committee developing the 1963 revision was influenced by growing neo-orthodox perspectives on Scripture.<sup>14</sup> They had added two phrases, which, because of ambiguity and with the two phrases added by moderates as cover for introducing questions about the reliability and authority of the text, were the issues that leaders of the conservative renaissance most wanted clarified. These can best be appreciated by the following comparison:

### 1925

*We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.*

### 1963

*The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure*

(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007). In the foreword of the latter volume, Susie Hawkins notes, "Given this charge, the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* study committee was formed. It was my privilege to be a part of this committee and to be present for all of its meetings. Dr. Patterson appointed a committee representative of Southern Baptist life. It was diverse not only in gender but also in ethnicity, representing the African-American, Hispanic, and Asian communities. It included theologians, pastors, a Baptist Student Union director, a state convention's Woman's Missionary Union and Women's Ministry director, seminary presidents, an agency head, and laypersons. Only persons committed to the inerrancy of Scripture were appointed to the committee," vii.

<sup>14</sup>See Paige Patterson, *Anatomy of a Reformation: The Southern Baptist Convention 1978-2004* (Fort Worth: Seminary Press, 2004), 16.

of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals the principles by which God judges us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. *The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.*

## 2000

*The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.*

The Committee affirmed that the Bible is a record of God's revelation, but they also realized that such language lent itself to a bifurcation of the Bible—a division between what is accepted as divine revelation and what is suspect. They also believed that the criteria by which the Bible should be interpreted is Christ, but they knew that what is known of Christ is from Scripture. Further, they had seen this phrase employed to negate certain passages that had made moderates socially uncomfortable as they tried to allege that Jesus would somehow have taught differently from what is recorded in the Bible on these points. Moreover, these 1963 insertions were not found in the New Hampshire Confession or the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message.

The most memorable moments in my ministerial life are easily identifiable. The opportunity to be spiritual midwife and assist, either through individual personal witness or through public proclamation, as people experience the New Birth—this joy is one my soul craves and to me is more fulfilling and astonishing than anything else. Only two other incidents come close, and they both occurred at meetings of the SBC. The first is the one-hour debate on the night of June 15, 2000, in Orlando, Florida. Scheduled for thirty minutes, the time was twice extended. Although apparently the mind of the messengers was to approve, unamended, the report of the Baptist Faith and Message committee, every opportunity was provided for messengers to debate the issue. As presiding officer and president of the convention, I did my best to exercise fairness and justice. The chairman of the committee, Adrian P. Rogers, assisted by committee members Charles S. Kelley Jr., Richard D. Land, and R. Albert Mohler Jr. spoke with brilliance



and perception that was as close to inspiration as I have ever heard. Clearly, opponents would never agree. I leave the resolution of that debate to all who will listen to the discussion.<sup>15</sup>

The other most memorable night unfolded on June 17, 1997, in the meeting of the SBC in Dallas, Texas. In every annual meeting of the SBC, each of the six seminaries must give a public report. On that night, a document composed by Al Mohler, with the encouragement and full consent of the other five presidents, entitled “One Faith, One Task, One Sacred Trust,” was distributed to the messengers.<sup>16</sup> Ken Hemphill, the president of Southwestern Seminary, had added his own touch by arranging for the desk and chair used by B. H. Carroll, the first president of Southwestern Seminary, to be placed on the platform as the setting for this historic moment. After the presentation of the document, each of the presidents—William Crews of Golden Gate Seminary, Charles Kelley of New Orleans Seminary, Mark Coppenger of Midwestern Seminary, Ken Hemphill of Southwestern Seminary, and Paige Patterson of Southeastern Seminary—each sat in Carroll’s chair to sign the document. Unfortunate illness and hospitalization prevented Al Mohler of Southern Seminary from being present, but Danny Akin, dean of Southern’s School of Theology, signed in Mohler’s behalf.

What transpired next was never anticipated. When the first president sat and began to sign, the thousands of messengers stood spontaneously and began sustained applause, which continued until all six presidents had signed and for a total of almost fifteen minutes. The presidents understood clearly that the applause was not for them. This was an expression of profound gratitude to God for what was viewed by the messengers as the culmination of all that for which conservatives had sought. This event, coupled with the adoption of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 three years later, can be considered the climax of the conservative renaissance in Southern Baptist life.

### **The Devil Never Sleeps—What Is the Future?**

The dawning of the twenty-first century appeared to be a hopeful era for Southern Baptists. Moderates left the train, some to the newly formed Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and some to more liberal denominations. A confident peace seemed prevalent, and the day had come to pursue the stated goal of the conservative renaissance—the evangelization of North America and the world. The spurs to the flanks of the SBC mare had never been orthodoxy for orthodoxy’s sake but orthodoxy as a launch pad for the gospel.

<sup>15</sup>Audio and video cassettes of the debate are available for purchase—see <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc00/home2000.html>.

<sup>16</sup>See Appendix. Also included in Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 478-80; available on-line in the “Baptist Confessions and Doctrinal Statements” of the Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry, a research institute of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at <http://www.baptistcenter.com/onefaithonetaskonesacredtrust.html>.

Baptists and Anabaptists have been nothing if not aggressively evangelistic and missionary.

But the new orthodox consensus was scarcely in place before flood waters of change threatened. The massive resources of the SBC were now the object of much interest from many individuals and groups. Multiple interests began pulling at the structure of the convention and at its churches as though they were a piece of taffy candy. To mention a few, Baptist churches by virtue of their autonomy are easy targets for some strands of the emergent movement. A new form of ecumenism threatens the distinctives of Baptist doctrine, especially in ecclesiological matters. As Harvey Cox points out in his monograph on charismatics, their infiltration of other denominations, if only partly successful theologically, has been overwhelmingly adopted in much contemporary music.<sup>17</sup> The remarkable history of Calvinists and non-Calvinists working together in SBC life has become strained with the advance of Reformed ideas and even ecclesiology in the convention. How divisive this becomes remains to be seen. As moderates predicted, the conservative victors have had a difficult time working with one another once the moderates departed. Concerns, sometimes petty and sometimes serious, have divided leaders.

Other concerns, which to my mind are much more serious and threatening, begin with a failure adequately to seek the face of God. Associated with this failure is a loss of the sense of what is holy. I am less than certain that their remains in most of our churches the discernment to distinguish between the holy and the profane. Some of this arises in reaction to legalism, real and perceived, but much of it seems to confuse the Jesus of faith and the popular culture, which somehow can both be tolerated within the body of Christ. Roger Scruton, as a critic of contemporary culture, has written one of the most unpopular but incisive assessments, which all would do well to read. Scruton, in a chapter entitled “Yoofanasia,” observes:

It must by now be apparent that high culture in our time cannot be understood if we ignore the popular culture which roars all around it. This popular culture is pre-eminently a culture of youth. There is an important reason for this, and my purpose in this chapter is to bring this reason to light—to show why it is that youth and the culture of youth have become so visible, in the world after faith.

Among youth, as we know it from our modern cities, a new human type is emerging. It has its own language, its own customs, its own territory and its own self-contained economy. It also has its own culture—a culture which is largely indifferent to traditional boundaries, traditional loyalties, and traditional forms of learning. Youth culture is a global force, propagated through

<sup>17</sup>Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo, 1995), 139-57.

media which acknowledge neither locality nor sovereignty in their easy-going capture of the air-waves; “one world, one music,” in the slogan adopted by MTV, a channel which assembles the words, images and sounds which are the *lingua franca* of modern adolescents.<sup>18</sup>

Later, Scruton becomes more specific.

From this there follows the iconisation of the totem. Singers, groups or lead performers are not constrained by musical standards. But they are constrained by their totemic role. They must be young, sexually attractive, and with the plaintive voice of youthful desire—like the girly group called All Saints. Of course, popular musicians have always been idolized, as were Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, and Cliff Richard. But those old-style icons grew up in time, passed over from adolescence to adulthood, became mellow, avuncular and religious. The modern pop star does not grow up. He grows sideways, like Mick Jagger or Michael Jackson, becoming waxy and encrusted as though covered by a much-repainted mask. Such spectral creatures haunt for a while the halls of fame, trailing behind them the ghosts of their vanished fans. And then, overnight, they disappear.

Modern pop stars and groups often refuse to answer to a normal human name, since to do so would compromise their totemic status. The name must be an icon of membership. Sting, R.E.M., Nirvana, Hanson, Madonna, U2 are like the species names assumed by tribal groups, in order to clarify their social identity, with the difference that is not biological species that are invoked by the titles, but glamorized human types.<sup>19</sup>

Having less of an authentic historical perspective is another serious problem. There is little memory about the sacrifices of four centuries of Baptist leaders; and, in fact, most seem not to even know the names of their progenitors. The Baptist triumph of religious liberty for all has been so prevalent in America that the present generation cannot recall the day when persecution came from every direction. Fewer pastors seem to be calling out the called. The age of the internet freeway to quick access to knowledge inspires fewer to seek the steadying influence of years of study and guidance in Bible college or seminary, and the general tendency toward shorter degree programs and the overall dumbing down of pastoral preparation, as well as the shallowness of sermonettes all raise serious questions about what the churches will look like in twenty years. “Networks” become quasi-denominations and

<sup>18</sup>Roger Scruton, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's, 2000), 105.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

seek the loyalty and financial support of affiliated churches, sometimes even providing pastors with sermons ready to preach like prefab buildings. I could go on.

So what of the future for Southern Baptists? Am I concerned? Always. Am I profoundly concerned? Never. Here is why. I am a West Texas country preacher and not a historian. But I have lived nearly forever and have read a few books along the way. Here is how I see it.

First, Baptists need God, but God will do just fine without Baptists. He will coach whichever team desires to know His mind and to do His will. But He has promised never to leave Himself without a witness, and should Baptists wish to be a part of that plan He will welcome them.

Second, fads rise and fall with increasing frequency. Much of what churches face as new and innovative will soon move out to sea, replaced without doubt by other new fads on steroids. Wood, hay, and stubble are always consumed by the fire of Christ's gaze; but gold, silver, and precious stone are only purified thereby. So it has been and ever it will be.

A Southern Baptist—even if he lives in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; Horseheads, New York; Gun Barrel City, Texas; or Front Sight, Nevada—cherishes his freedom; but many have some difficulty making accurate distinctions between their personal desires and God's will and purpose. Commoner roots and a rambunctious and torrid history make them awfully puckish—exactly the right word, I think, since many Baptist gatherings resemble nothing if not a hockey contest. Excessive activity racing to and fro in following an object of relatively little significance, frequent confrontations, occasional penalties, and rare scores characterize both endeavors. But both tend to bring out the crowds.

Third, there is a generational cycle to the history of the church. Revival fires are lit by one generation, stoked and admired by another, and, as often as not, neglected and even ignored by a warm third generation. Then arises a cold generation, who, in the search to be warm, discovers the barely simmering coals of former generations. They began to pray that the billows of the Holy Spirit will blow on those embers, and soon the fire rages again.

Finally, Southern Baptists do have a generation gap in leadership due to the era of wandering from the faith in our seminaries. That admitted, the younger generation is amazing. I am not speaking of those who seem ubiquitous based on the turmoil they generate and who spend inordinate time meditating on their personal whims on the blogs. Rather I speak of a generation of young adults with a will to take Christ to the nations regardless of sacrifice. They love the Word of God, desire to teach its message, and desire holiness before God. They will grow in grace, prayer, sanctification, and knowledge. The future is in good hands.

### Conclusion

Numerous assessments of the conservative renaissance in the Southern Baptist Convention, written from widely disparate perspectives, already line the shelves of the library of the Baptist Historical Archives in Nashville, Tennessee. This brief overview suffers along with all such efforts by way of its proximity to the events. All sources will doubtless be consulted by future historians, who can attempt, having been removed from the emotions and passions of the present, to assess the motives, actions, and results of all the players on the SBC stage.

Every generation has its own battles, and not infrequently, resurrects conflicts from the past. The next few generations of Baptists, being a free people, will debate fiercely. But the reliability and authority of God's Word that guided Baptist life for the first 100 years of the Southern Baptist Convention will likely now guide the next 100 years if Jesus delays His return. Those who led the movement are retiring or transferring residence to a happy clime where God's Word is never contested. None to my knowledge regrets what was done, though hindsight might dictate some changes of method and action. Pastors, evangelists, and missionaries determined to get the saving gospel of Christ to all people will never consistently emerge from the framework of those who question the truthfulness of the Bible, whatever their virtues. We have given our children, grandchildren, and sons in the ministry a chance to live under and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ by preserving the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. May the grace of God attend them and keep them faithful. We gladly pass the torch to the next generation!

## Appendix

### **One Faith, One Task, One Sacred Trust: A Covenant Between Our Seminaries and Our Churches**

For over 135 years, the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have looked to their seminaries for the training and education of their ministers. These six schools were established and undergirded by Southern Baptists in order that our churches may be served by a more faithful ministry.

This is a critical moment in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention and for our seminaries. The six seminaries serving this denomination bear a precious and perishable responsibility on behalf of our churches; for we are entrusted with those who will be their ministers, pastors, preachers and servants.

Looking to the dawn of the twenty-first century, we hereby restate and reaffirm our commitment to the churches we serve, to the convictions those churches hold and honor and to the charge we have received on their behalf.

#### **One Faith**

The church of Jesus Christ is charged to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Our seminaries, charged with the theological formation of ministers, must take this charge as central and essential to our mission. In an age of rampant theological compromise, our seminaries must send no uncertain sound.

Let the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention know that our seminaries are committed to theological integrity and biblical fidelity. Our pledge is to maintain the confessional character of our seminaries by upholding those doctrines so clearly articulated in our confessions of faith; by teaching the authority, inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible; by maintaining the purity of the Gospel and affirming the identity of Jesus Christ, by whose blood we have been redeemed and in whose name alone salvation is to be found; and by proclaiming with boldness the precious and eternal truths of God's Word.

In this we stand together, and we stand with our churches. We understand that those who teach take on an awesome responsibility and will receive from our Lord a stricter judgment. We stand before this convention and our churches to declare that we stand together in one faith, serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **One Task**

Our mission is to prepare ministers for service. We cannot call ministers nor appoint them to service. Ministers, called by God and commissioned by our churches come to us in order that they may through our seminaries receive learning, training and inspiration for service. Preachers, evangelists, missionaries and those who minister throughout the life of the churches

come to our seminaries with the hope that they will leave their programs of study better equipped, armed and matured for the faithful exercise of their calling.

Our mission is to remain ever true to this task. We declare our unflinching resolve to provide the very finest programs of theological education for ministry. We will match theological fidelity to practical ministry, passion to practice, vision to calling and honor to service. This is our task.

### **One Sacred Trust**

Our schools are not generic institutions for religious studies. We are the six theological seminaries serving the Southern Baptist Convention. We belong to you; we belong to the churches of this Convention. We are proud to carry your charge, and we declare our fidelity to you as a sacred trust. In this trust we stand before the Southern Baptist Convention, and we stand together.

Through the trustees elected by this Convention, our churches must hold our seminaries accountable to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to the essential task of training and educating ministers and to the sacred trust which unites our seminaries and our churches.

As the presidents of your seminaries, we declare our unbending and fervent resolve to uphold all of these commitments. We will lead our institutions so that no harm shall come to your students and ministers; so that they will be rooted and grounded in the truth; so that they will be trained as faithful and effective preachers and teachers; so that they will bring honor to the church and not dishonor; and so that we shall be able to give a good answer and receive a good report when we shall face that stricter judgment which is to come.

This is our pledge, our resolve, our declaration.

*Signed in the presence of the messengers to the 140<sup>th</sup> session of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17, 1997.*

## *Book Reviews*

### **Biblical Studies**

***Interpreting the Psalms for Teaching and Preaching.* Edited by Herbert W. Bateman IV and D. Brent Sandy. St. Louis: Chalice, 2010. 292 pages. Paperback, \$34.99.**

This work includes contributions from twenty scholars. Among these are Robert B. Chisholm Jr., David Dockery, Walter Kaiser Jr. and Eugene Merrill. Citing the need for the Christian community to correctly interpret, apply, and heed God's Word in order to grow spiritually as it should, the editors have designed this book to promote the informed teaching and preaching of the Psalms.

The book consists of three major parts. Part one introduces the Psalms and offers a foundation for their interpretation and proclamation. Calling them the "greatest book of poetry and prayers ever assembled," contributors D. Brent Sandy and Tiberius Rata describe the *modus operandi* of the Psalms as a reaching inward and then heavenward. Their human authors represent a wide range of life experiences and their audiences are equally diverse in their orientation. The reader will want to give careful attention to the emphasis of the aforementioned contributors concerning the recognition of a three-phased trajectory of meaning for the correct interpretation of the Psalms. This trajectory includes the contextual, canonical and typological elements. Robert Chisholm continues the introductory section by pointing to the Psalms as a "fertile seed-bed" for the preacher. His outlines of Psalms 30 and 12 offer excellent examples of a healthy interpretive process. Timothy J. Ralston completes part one by providing helpful and practical insights/tools with which to tackle the holy task of text-driven exposition of the Psalms.

Part two is the longest section of the book and focuses on the interpretation of selected Psalms within each of the five "books" of the Psalter. Readers will find J. Glen Taylor's treatment of the introductory role of Psalms 1–2 both intriguing and insightful. Taylor suggests (48) that the reference to "law" in Psalm 1 could refer to the five-book structure of the Psalms as a whole if "one considers this structure an echoing of the five-book Torah." Taylor's guidance regarding how one may read the Psalter messianically is both balanced and helpful.

In this part the reader will discover a treasure of expository insights that are rooted in the native soil of the biblical text. David C. Deuel's treatment of Psalm 19 takes the reader from "heaven's transcendence" to "covenant immanence." Herbert Bateman offers further fuel for the homeletical fire as he unpacks key aspects of authorial intent and poetic imagery in Psalm 46. Similar solid and meaty treatments of key Psalms from each "book" (Psalms 63, 73, 89, 110, 130) follow. Among these, this reviewer found especially challenging and edifying the chapters on Psalms 73 and 110.

Walter Kaiser deals with the conundrum of the prosperity of the wicked and the perspective of the believer. Emphasizing the twin themes of "restoring" and "restraining" grace in the Psalm, he offers a text-based outline which reflects the six strophes and rhetorical devices employed in Psalm 73.



In his survey of Psalm 110, Herbert Bateman views this royal Psalm as a source of assurance and confidence in the midst of life's changes. Noting that our vision of this Psalm may be so blurred by the New Testament's application to the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus that we fail to appreciate the psalmist's original social and historical context, he stresses the validity of viewing it as a psalm of assurance since it was written for a person about to transition from a Davidic heir to a Davidic king.

Part three of this book gives specific attention to the application of the Psalms. Julius Sing reflects on the variety of ways in which the Psalms are approached today for application. Using the imagery of a choir, he assumes that the Psalms are best heard "together as a choir." He sees them mostly for "performing" as chorales and rightly asserts that they celebrate dialogue with Yahweh and not merely monologue or self-talk.

An interesting inclusion to this application section is Marion Ann Taylor's focus on application of the Psalms by women of the nineteenth century. Acknowledging that men are the authors of most of the published works on Psalms, she magnifies the role of women as mothers, teachers, and leaders in proclaiming their timeless truths.

David Dockery's chapter on the Psalms and their influence on Christian worship is cogent and practical, offering five key characteristics of the worship portrayed in them (234). A final chapter addresses the Psalms in the hands of preachers and teachers. Authors Brent Sandy and Kenneth Bickel acknowledge the challenge of preaching/teaching the Psalms and admirably assert the necessity of the text dictating the form or shape of the sermon. With illuminating insights from homileticians Jeffery Arthurs and Haddon Robinson, the authors offer concrete steps for gaining the correct understanding of a Psalm (216). This reviewer found particularly scintillating the word-picture associated with an MRI and its connection to Psalm 139.

The book includes a helpful classification of Psalms by categories and titles as well as extensive notes and a bibliography. These alone make the book a welcome addition to the pastor's library.

In an atmosphere such as our present denominational climate (SBC) that, as it should, trumpets the authority and inerrancy of Scripture while at the same time often being deficient in delivering the "whole counsel of God," this book is a needed and welcomed elixir for encouraging robust exposition from the Psalms.

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***Nahum.* By Duane L. Christensen. *The Anchor Yale Bible. Volume 24f.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 423 + xxxiv pages. Cloth, \$65.00.**

Christensen's volume on Nahum highlights many aspects of his work that is unconventional among Old Testament scholarship. In particular Christensen has devoted much of the commentary to the description and explanation of his method of analyzing poetic texts, which he calls "logoprosodic analysis." This kind of analysis "involves the counting of three distinct elements: (1) *morae* . . . (2) SAS units . . . and (3) words" (12). *Morae* are units for measuring a syllable in which "a syllable with a short vowel is one *mora*; a syllable with a long vowel is two *morae*" and SAS units refer to the "groupings of words between two successive disjunctive accent marks" (12).

By counting these distinct elements, Christensen uncovers certain numerical patterns that form the basis for his outline of the literary structure of the book. These numerical patterns are then related to letters of the alphabet through forms of gematria. The process results in uncovering coded messages within the text. For instance, Christensen states that originally “Nahum apparently had  $559 = 299 + 260$  words.” “The number 559 ( $= 43 \times 13$ ) may have been selected for its symbolic value, because 43 ( $= 17 + 26$ ) is the sum of the two numbers for the divine name and the number 13 is associated with the Hebrew word *ʿehad* (‘one’). Yhwh alone is the true God, and he tolerates no rival” (10).

Christensen goes on to associate these numerical patterns and their alphabetic counterparts with musical composition and matrix mathematics. These patterns serve as metaphors that communicate theological truth through matrix arithmetic. Christensen states that “it is not yet clear how this system of thought eventually disappeared within the mainstream of Jewish and Christian thought” (26). Anticipating that contemporary readers may find these patterns and messages hidden or obscure, Christensen writes, “What appears hidden and obscure to modern eyes was not necessarily perceived that way in antiquity, at least in terms of matrix arithmetic and musical metaphor in relation to concepts developed from the tuning of musical instruments” (25).

On the basis of Christensen’s logoprosodic analysis and its relationship to musical composition and matrix arithmetic, Christensen argues that Nahum is a numerical composition that is the “product of a skilled scribal craftsman” (25). As the product of a scribe, the “work was written from the outset, not merely a work written to preserve the spoken words of the prophet” (157). As a result, the historical prophet Nahum fades into the background. Furthermore, Christensen argues that the scribal activity that produced Nahum is part of the larger Book of the Twelve Prophets. Christensen draws the following conclusion from these observations: “The book of Nahum was ultimately written as a numerical composition in the context of the Babylonian Exile or shortly thereafter. . . . In one sense, then, the redactor of that larger work [Book of the Twelve Prophets] became the ‘author’ of the book of Nahum, as we now have it, and the historical prophet was lost within the canonical process itself” (56).

This methodological backdrop sets the stage for Christensen’s comments on Nahum. Many of his comments are devoted to the structural and text-critical issues of Nahum. However, in each section he does provide a short summary of the intended meaning of the text and its theological import. For instance, his discussion of Nahum 1:1–10 consists of two sections: 1) fifty pages devoted to technical matters of structure (and the coded messages revealed by the structure), text-criticism, semantics, accentuation, historical and literary background, and other matters and 2) five pages summarizing the theological import of the passage. The numbers do not tell the entire story, but it should be clear that much of the commentary is devoted to technical matters of structure and discerning the encoded messages, if any, that the structure reveals.

On the one hand, Christensen’s commentary is an important resource for information regarding the structural and textual issues of Nahum. He interacts competently with the different voices in the history of research and provides a helpful resource with 80 pages of bibliography. He consistently applies his methodology to the book. On the other hand, because of the emphasis on poetic structure and his unconventional interpretations of it, many readers will find much of his work

inaccessible. I fear that those who come to the commentary in order to find clear explanations of a complex biblical book will find a mysterious, though meticulous, analysis that will itself feel hidden and obscure.

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***The Historical Jesus of the Gospels.* By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 831 + xxxviii pages. Hardback, \$60.00.**

Craig Keener, professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary, has written an excellent and helpful addition to what has become a field crowded with numerous writings in the last two decades: historical Jesus research. Interestingly, the book prologue is unusually frank. Keener admits he wrote this volume to impact this field because many scholars have otherwise ignored what he has written on this subject in his commentaries (xxviii–xxix). Keener’s commentaries on John (two volumes) and Matthew are great, but the field of historical Jesus research is so crowded with books that scholars tend to ignore what is written in commentaries.

Keener’s work has three sections. In the first section he gives a brief overview of historical Jesus research in order to show where his view fits (46), which is a refined and more conservative view of E.P. Sanders, under whom Keener studied. He views Jesus as an eschatological prophet (35, 41, 43–46). As do most New Testament scholars today (but not this reviewer), Keener believes in the Two Source Theory of Gospel origins, which includes Markan priority and the existence and use of the Q document (61, 71, 74, 127, 131–33, 236, 281).

It is the second section of the book that offers the best contribution to historical Jesus research. Here Keener gives valuable insight of Gospel genre in comparison to genre in Greco-Roman literature—primarily in biography and historiography. Four strengths are evident. First, although he makes distinctions between modern and ancient biographies as well as historiographies, he also demonstrates helpful similarities (81–84, 94–96, 109–10). Second, citing numerous historical examples, Keener proves that ancient biographers and historiographers were much more concerned with writing accurate historical details than modern Bible critics give them credit (79–81, 96–98, 123). Third, he proves that ancient historiographers valued eyewitness information as the most valuable source and understood that recent sources (such as what the canonical Gospel writers had—mere decades after the events), were much more reliable than later sources (102–05). This research is invaluable for answering Bible critics who claim that the Gospel writers disregarded actual historical events and simply created events for unprovenanced sayings of Jesus. Keener continually contends that the ancient biographer and historiographer rarely invented fictitious events because that practice brought scorn from both peers and patrons (97, 100–02). Fourth, Keener notes the value of and the ancient expectation that an historian would write from a certain perspective (it is impossible not to have any biases), but the writers still sought to be objective in citing historical events (118).

The third section of the book is the application section: going through the Gospels to test what is historically accurate, but this is mostly a thematic treatment. Although very good, it is simply too short. Keener should have created this section as a separate volume, similarly to what Darrell Bock did in his excellent informal trilogy that culminated with *Jesus according to Scripture*.

Why should a conservative Christian be interested in historical Jesus research? First, it is important for conservative Christian scholars to participate in this scholarly debate about how accurate the four canonical Gospels are in depicting the true, historical Jesus. Opinions vary from the Gospels being totally accurate (the most conservative view) to mostly inaccurate (the most liberal view), with a range of views in between. Second, it is important for non scholarly conservative Christians to be familiar with this scholarly conversation because one can glean much useful apologetic material to use when sharing with a skeptic about the Bible.

Although easy to understand, Keener's book adds to what can be a very technical and sometimes tedious field, so this book is most valuable to the scholar or student in the field of historical Jesus Research. So, the pastor, teacher, or student looking for insightful information from the Gospels would be better served by using Keener's commentaries on Matthew or John rather than this book.

Since the subject matter is so specialized, the decision to use endnotes (209 pages worth) rather than footnotes for this volume is quite puzzling. Normally publishers use footnotes for scholarly, technical works like this book because readers of these books want to read the numerous footnotes. Correspondingly, publishers use endnotes when a book has a popular audience because non-technical readers will be put off by footnotes. So, the scholarly reader must flip back and forth in this book several times every page or simply forego reading footnotes along with the text—neither one a good choice.

The conclusion is surprisingly short (barely half of a page) for a book this size, but the last sentence sums up well the tenor and the direction of the book: "Although scholars may differ with this or that aspect of the portrayal, I believe on the whole there is much that we can know about Jesus historically, and that the first-century Gospels preserved by the church remain by far the best source for this information" (349).

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***Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened.* By Craig A. Evans and N.T. Wright. Edited by Troy A. Miller. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 116 + xii pages. Paperback, \$15.00.**

This excellent little volume consists of three chapters which were originally lectures that Craig Evans and N.T. Wright presented at the Symposium for Church and Academy lecture series at Crichton College in Memphis, Tennessee (vii). They were the first two lecturers in an annual lecture series devoted to help close the wide gap between the academy and the church (viii).

To keep this book on a popular level the chapters are modified versions of the lectures, and there are body notes rather than footnotes. However, neither scholar watered down the subject, and there are plenty of helpful citations and quotations from Scripture as well as rabbinical writings, Dead Sea Scrolls, and ancient historians, such as Josephus (e.g., xi–xii, 3–4, 12, 17, 26–27, 31, 48–52). Each scholar's lectures cover areas about which he has published (in much greater detail than in this book) and is a recognized expert: Evans on Jesus' death and burial and Wright on Jesus' resurrection. Both write from the perspective that these were real events and not merely theological ideas—refreshing claims in light of today's rampant skepti-

cism in Historical Jesus research (2–5, 72, 104).

Since the book is easily readable in one sitting, one might assume it is helpful only to the novice; however, this is not the case. Even the expert can find something new, such as Evan's noting that from examination of the bones of executed criminals in ancient Rome, in over half of the beheadings it took two or three strokes of the axe to sever the head (56)! This fact helps lend credence to Evan's assertion that it was common practice to bury executed criminals during peacetime (but not during wartime) in Rome, thus countering the critics' claim that no one would have buried Jesus' body (58–59, 62).

Both writers give helpful answers to common criticisms of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus: (1) the seemingly contradictory evidence of Jesus' hearings and trials (14–16), Pilate's Passover pardon (20–22), Pilate's wavering on what to do with Jesus (24), the alleged scandal of burying Jesus since He was crucified (62), the claim that the disciples went to the wrong tomb (64–65), the assertion Jesus did not die (3–5, 65), the claim it was merely a vision or metaphor rather than a physical resurrection of Jesus (101–03), the ludicrous belief that Jesus' family tomb and his ossuary have been found (65–68), and the seemingly contradictory accounts of the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection appearances (79–81).

Highlights of Evan's chapters are his descriptions of the necessity of burial in the ancient Mediterranean world (46–53) and of archeological evidence of burial in the Roman era (53–59). Highlights of Wright's chapter are his seven ways the early Christian belief differed from the Jewish belief in resurrection (84–95) and four strange features of the canonical Gospel accounts that attest to their earliness and authenticity (95–100). It is refreshing that both Evans and Wright do not sideline the Gospel of John but use that Gospel on par with the Synoptic Gospels, unlike many scholars today (i.e., 15–17, 45–46, 83–84).

Even though the purpose of this book was to present the three lectures, it would have been interesting to have a short chapter where each lecturer gives a response on the lecture of the other. Also, although the body notes are helpful and especially ample in Evan's chapters, there are some references that did not have citations (39). Other criticisms are minor, such as wondering why Evans mentions reasons they offered Jesus wine during the crucifixion but does not mention that Jesus said, "I thirst" (John 19:28).

This book is an excellent volume, especially for people who are not familiar with scholarly writings on these subjects. It certainly is commendable for meeting its purpose of bridging the gap between the church and the academy.

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***The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within its Cultural Contexts.* By Gary M. Burge, Lynn H. Cohick, and Gene L. Green. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 479 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99.**

*The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament within its Cultural Contexts* is a beautiful volume and a student favorite taking you on a visual journey through the world of the New Testament. The twenty seven-chapter work covers the historical setting of the New Testament, the world of Jesus and world of Paul, each book of the New Testament (some books are grouped together), and the

canon and text of the New Testament. In addition to written material, each chapter contains numerous color images, maps, charts, and sidebars which bring the world of the New Testament to life like no other book on the market today. The images, which are one of the strongest features of the volume, include archaeological sites, landscapes, statues, coins, pottery, mosaics, inscriptions, and manuscripts, to name only a few.

The authors give four goals for the work: academic rigor and thoroughness, accessibility, a focus on the ancient context of the New Testament, and a confessional commitment to the evangelical tradition. In my estimation, they have accomplished the final three while only partially meeting the first. Although the work approaches 500 pages, each chapter is brief and full of images, providing only a sketch of some of the detailed information that one would expect in a New Testament survey or introduction. By eliminating the images, charts, and sidebars (which would certainly be a mistake), the volume would decrease by approximately 50%. As an example of the brevity, the discussion of the authorship of Ephesians spans a page and a half and that of 2 Peter half a page. While it may be appropriate to eliminate some of these items altogether in order to make a specific contribution, by discussing many of these items briefly, the goal of thoroughness has not been met. At the same time, the brevity of each chapter provides students a valuable and scenic overview of the landscape of New Testament studies. At the graduate level, the book is best used in tandem with other volumes that more thoroughly address introductory issues. At the undergraduate level, the volume could stand on its own depending upon the focus of the course.

In its first edition, the book is tainted slightly by a few too many editorial mistakes. While this may seem pedantic, such mistakes are perhaps more troublesome for a volume of this sort. As an example, one of the first images is mistakenly identified as papyrus manuscript 52. If an image is not what it is meant to be, it may do more harm than good. Furthermore, if there is one error of this sort, the possibility of others seems likely. Nonetheless, one can certainly forgive the editors inasmuch as the book contains hundreds of images of many different sorts, and only experts in each field could verify the legitimacy of each.

My strongest criticism of the work pertains to the lack of thorough documentation. Each chapter contains only a handful of endnotes, often leaving the reader with no clear place to go to substantiate the authors' claims. This too impacts the authors' goals of academic rigor and thoroughness.

These reservations notwithstanding, *The New Testament in Antiquity* makes a solid contribution to the field and will likely find its way into many classrooms in the coming years.

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***Paul, His Letters, and Acts.* By Thomas E. Phillips. Library of Pauline Studies. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. 243 pages. Softcover, \$24.95.**

In 1845 F.C. Baur published his two-volume work, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi*, in which he argued that the genuine Pauline letters present a different picture of the apostle than does the Book of Acts. Baur's arguments aside, his separation of the letters from Acts still marks New Testament studies (32–33). Phillips' book

purports to present the intersecting data from these two sources and how scholars relate them (xi). The footnotes refer to the author's views and other works, but the book carefully presents the biblical data and the scholarly discourse about them.

The first chapter summarizes two widely divergent reconstructions of the historical Paul (Chilton 2004, Crossan and Reed 2004) to illustrate that one's approach to the data of Acts is pivotal for reconstructing Paul's life (27). The second chapter briefly recounts the contributions of Baur, John Knox, and Philipp Vielhauer, all three of whom argued for irreconcilable differences between the Acts data set and the Pauline data (35–42). For his part, Phillips acknowledges that the biblical texts were not intended to answer modern critical questions, that they have significant areas of silence, and that the "inconsistency and diversity" within themselves and between each other allow many possible explanations (42–47). For each intersecting point, he proposes to focus on the historical data of the Pauline letters first before culling the larger data set from Acts, comparing them after they have been treated separately (47–49).

The last four chapters deal successively with the chronology of Paul's life, his personal background, those with whom he interacted at the Jerusalem Conference, and other associates who were absent from the Jerusalem Conference. Along the way, Phillips often points out ways that interpreters unwittingly merge the two data sets that they presume to keep separate. For instance, on Pauline chronology: "Even approaches that make no direct appeal to Acts often rely upon existing scholarly consensuses for the dates and order of Paul's letters," which themselves often make use of Acts' data (51). The author also rates just how reconcilable the two data sets are on different issues. Many points of comparison appear not too difficult to reconcile. The most disparate data sets between Acts and Paul's letters are those that relate to: the number and purposes of Paul's visits to Jerusalem (72–82), the trumped-up social status of Paul in Acts (122–24), Paul's relation to and unity with Peter and James (146–47, 150–56), and Timothy's relative insignificance in Acts in comparison to the letters (184–87).

The conclusion returns to the issue of the Jerusalem Conference. Whether one correlates Acts 15 with Galatians 2:1–10 is the pivotal issue for understanding how Paul's letters and Acts relate to one another (191). If Paul's Jerusalem visit in Acts 11–12 correlates to Galatians 2:1–10, then Galatians would display a temporary rift between Paul and Peter. Subsequently, the Jerusalem Conference ameliorated Paul's relation to Jewish Christianity en masse. In sum, the Paul of history would "lean" toward the picture of him in Acts (192). However, if Acts 15 correlates to Galatians 2:1–10, then "Galatians comes to be regarded as a reflection of the central and abiding core of Paul's theological convictions" (193). This critical consensus implies that Paul's influence waned after his conflict with Peter (194). The collection for Jerusalem "had only meager hopes for success." When Paul claimed he had no room left to preach in the East (Rom 15:23), his rejection by many churches was the issue, not his unbounded success in evangelizing the Mediterranean coastlands (195). Paul died a failure, but one of his admirers saw the need to salvage his legacy. "Critical scholars are increasingly coming to argue that one of the major purposes of Acts was the rehabilitation of Paul for its late first- or early second-century readers." Phillips agrees (197).

Until the conclusion, the author's views only minimally color his presentation and comparison of the two data sets. The Jerusalem Conference rightly takes center stage in discussing whether the two data sets can be reconciled. One might wish

that Phillips had mentioned alternatives to the critical consensus besides the early date for Galatians, which is respectfully treated in chapter three. For example, some argue that Galatians 1–2 do not claim to recount all of Paul’s visits to Jerusalem. The language there allows for other visits to be omitted that do not pertain to the argument (cf. Silva’s *Interpreting Galatians*, 2nd ed., 129–39 for the brief argument). In this scenario, Paul’s conflict with Peter might have corrected real hypocrisy, clarifying how Gentiles would be included among God’s people.

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***The Pauline Canon*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter. Leiden: Brill, 2004. Reprint, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. 254 pages. Paperback, \$32.95.**

*The Pauline Canon* is a reprinted volume, which consists of eight essays on Paul and the early church’s use of his letters. Historically and also in biblical studies, the “canon” frequently refers to the 66 books of the Bible—39 of the Old Testament, and 27 in the New. These essays discuss the more specific Pauline corpus of writing as well the content of theology within this corpus. Among the writers of these articles, the idea of a “Pauline canon” falls short of a consensus, but setting aside the lack of a unified view, these articles explore the context, acceptance, and circulation of Paul’s letter writing.

James W. Aageson’s “The Pastoral Epistles, Apostolic Authority, and the Development of the Pauline Scriptures” examines the importance of Pauline authority in light of the theology that is embedded in the narrative world and the need to adhere to doctrine. The work of God is the larger story, which involves the community espousing the canon. Aageson concludes that the pastoral letters offer sound teaching of Paul to be used in the larger narrative framework of the church. Robert W. Wall looks at the function of the Pastoral Epistles and gives an overview of the formation of the canon in light of them. Wall works off of the premise that the Pastoral Epistles are not canonical but shed light on the canonical process. What is evident from them is the ecclesiastical discipline for forming the moral character of the church—a discipleship process in the community.

M-É. Boismard suggests that the letter to the Laodiceans is embedded in Colossians, by pointing to the apparent doublets, the repeated patterns, in the letter. By separating the doublets by thematic categories, Boismard attempts to reconstruct the Laodicean letter. Detlev Dormeyer explores the substitutionary presence of the author in letters—a feature that appears in Graeco-Roman letter writing and 1 Corinthians 5:3: “though absent in the body, I am present in spirit.” Cicero, Pseudo-Demetrius, and Aristotle are some of the authors mentioned.

Stanley Porter’s essay on the compilation of the Pauline canon serves as the crux of this collection. Porter presents five competing theories: 1) the gradual collection theory (Zahn-Harnack), 2) lapsed interest theory (Goodspeed-Knox), 3) anti-gnostic theory (Schmitals), 4) personal involvement theory (Moule: Luke, Guthrie: Timothy), and 5) Paul as collector and distributor (Trobisch). Mark Harding takes the given categories of disputed, undisputed, and spurious letters, and recounts the discussions both in history and present times. Harding is convinced that the early church was accepting of pseudepigraphal works for the sake of establishing apostolic authority and defending its faith.



J.C. O'Neill argues: "Paul wrote some of all, but not all of any epistles that bear his name; even Philemon was glossed" (167). O'Neill points to Paul's frequent use of a secretary (*amanuensis*) and E.E. Ellis' well-documented work on pre-formed traditions and documented copies of Paul's letter.

William O. Walker Jr., explores the plausibility of interpolations in Paul's letters. Walker defines an interpolation as "foreign material inserted deliberately and directly into the text of a document" (195–96). Walker presses his case *a priori* from the common presence of interpolation in ancient literature, as well as the suspicion of copyist errors and bundled collections of Paul's letters. Walker goes on to say that once editorial revisions began, there was no need to keep older copies.

The purpose of these essays is obviously not to put forward a unifying view or doctrine of Paul's canon of letters. The discussions often leave open-ended conclusions with no definitive answers to the questions posed, but rather there are more speculations, which are unsettling as to the issue of Pauline authorship and authority. These discussions are predisposed and inclined to questioning the integrity of the letters, suggesting that there is a constant editing and reworking of the text.

Although those interested in the academic forum may find these discussions of some interest, they will often discover these conclusions appearing rather hasty or even inconclusive. Readers hoping for breakthroughs in Pauline canon research may find the lack of consensus bitterly disappointing. Take for instance Porter's conclusion in his central paper: "This paper may appear to be simply a repetition of previously proposed views, with critical responses that leave each position seriously, if not fatally wounded. If such is the case, then that in itself is a positive result of sorts—there is no entirely satisfactory theory as to the origins of the Pauline letter collection" (121).

This conclusion may very well be fitting for the entire volume. The discussions will no doubt continue. The fruit of these discussions, however, may be too soon to tell.

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***The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach.* By Michael R. Licona. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010. 718 pages. Paperback, \$40.00.**

Michael Licona, External Research Collaborator at North-West University in South Africa, has caused quite a controversy with this mammoth monograph on Jesus' resurrection. Interestingly, the area of contention is a somewhat minor point of the book, and the people upset are some fellow theological conservatives rather than the nonbelievers Licona intends to impact with the book.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Writing this book led to Licona's departure from being Research Professor at the North American Mission Board on 31 December 2011, according to Ross. Bobby Ross, Jr., "A Grave Debate: Apologist's Interpretation of Matthew 27 Creates Theological War of Words," *Christianity Today* (November, 2011): 14. See also, Erin Roach, "Apologist's Views Brings Back Inerrancy Debate," Baptist Press, 9 November 2011, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=36522> (Accessed 9 January 2012). Well-known apologist Norman Geisler has posted three open letters on the Internet criticizing Licona's view as contrary to biblical inerrancy and calling for Licona to recant. The following citations give the letters and Licona's response in chronological order. Norman Geisler, "An Open Letter to Mike Licona on his View

### Much to Commend

Much of this book is excellent, so this review will begin by looking at the best parts. Although Jesus' resurrection continues to be the topic of numerous books today, Licona's book is unique in its historiographical approach—employing much interaction with secular historians as well as critics of Christianity. He wrote this book from the perspective of a philosopher of history (167), and it is an updated version of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Pretoria (22). Licona is correct that most biblical scholars are not trained historians. He carefully and effectively explains what a proper philosophy of history and historical method entail (29–70), and he ably demonstrates the weaknesses of postmodernist history (79–89).

There is much to commend in this book. First, and most important, Licona posits solid arguments for believing in the biblical account of Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions (300), his crucifixion (302–12), and his bodily resurrection—which is the apex of the book's presentation (582–610). Licona uses five clearly-delineated criteria (explanatory scope, explanatory power, plausibility, less *ad hoc*, and illumination, 600–01, see 606) to skillfully demonstrate how Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection is superior to five naturalistic hypotheses (championed by Vermes, Goulder, Lüdemann, Crossan, and Craffert), such as Michael Goulder's erroneous view that Jesus' followers experienced hallucinations and communal delusions (479–95).

Second, Licona has extensively researched his topic, and the book has copious footnotes as a result. Third, after explaining how one's horizons (core beliefs) can possibly influence one's research and conclusions (38–40, 127), Licona gives a refreshingly honest testimony and self disclosure about his conservative evangelical beliefs (130–32). Fourth, since he wrote from the perspective of a philosopher of history (167, 612) and employed a purposeful personal detachment from the subject (467) as well as a methodological neutrality in his investigation (99, 207), his research can have more impact on a nonbeliever than a typically-biased apologetic writing. However, one might find this unbiased evaluation of historical sources, including New Testament accounts, somewhat disconcerting (199–276)! For instance, he assigns the following rankings for biblical sources as to the "likelihood they provide independent testimony to apostolic teaching" (201): 'possible-plus' for Romans 1:3b–4a, 'possible' for Luke 24:34, and 'highly probable' for 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 (235). Fifth, the book is well written, and Licona uses excellent illustrations to aid one's understanding (e.g., 41, 72–73, 83, 97–98, 411). Thus, he rightly claims that some exegetes stretch biblical words in a 'torture chamber' in order to reach their mangled conclusions (109).

of the Resurrected Saints in Matthew 27:52–53," [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/openletterML.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/openletterML.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012); Norman Geisler, "A Second Open Letter to Mike Licona on the Resurrection of the Saints of Matthew 27," August 21, 2011, [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/openletterMLII.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/openletterMLII.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012). Licona's response is posted on Facebook: Michael Licona, "An Open Response to Norman Geisler," 31 August 2011, Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/notes/michael-licona/an-open-response-to-norman-geisler/157410607676207>, (Accessed 9 January 2012). Geisler's third open letter to Licona is a response to Licona's August 31 open letter: Norman Geisler, "A Response to Mike Licona's Open Letter," Sept. 8, 2011, [http://www.normangeisler.net/public\\_html/responseMLIII.html](http://www.normangeisler.net/public_html/responseMLIII.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012).

### The Problematic Parts

It is disappointing when a conservative evangelical theologian posits arguments that undermine his or her position, and here lies the weaknesses of this book. The flash point is Licona's belief that the account of the saints who arose from the dead and went to Jerusalem to proclaim Jesus' resurrection was just an apocalyptic embellishment by Matthew rather than historical fact (Matt 27:52–53). The problem with such a belief is that if one interprets *any* such historical details in Scripture as embellishments, then drawing the line between historical fact and literary embellishment becomes subjective and arbitrary, thus playing into the very arguments of the most liberal Bible critics.

Licona has recently somewhat softened his view about the resurrected saints in Matthew. He now says he is just as inclined to believe this event is historical as he is to believe it is “an apocalyptic symbol.”<sup>2</sup> However, to return halfway between an error and truth is still to remain in error.

Yet, this claim of Matthean exaggeration is not the only example of Licona discounting the historicity of details in the New Testament. Here are some examples of similarly problematic claims: (1) Matthew's cataclysmic events and two angels are legendary (185–86), (2) many details of the canonical Gospel crucifixion and resurrection accounts may be fiction (309), (3) “three days” means just “a short period of time” rather than at least a portion of “three days” (325–28), (4) Gospel narratives had other possible embellishments because the Gospel genre allowed such liberties (338, 593–97), (5) Luke may have invented narratives in Acts for details he found in Paul's letters (387), and (6) Paul's resurrection reports are the only verifiable written eyewitness reports in the New Testament (437)—but what about Matthew's and John's Gospels since their writers were apostles? In each of these examples, Licona falls into the same trap that naturalistic scholars find themselves—explaining away biblical details as myth or embellishment rather than historical realities. Although he explains why one should not make the mistake of claiming Jesus' bodily resurrection is embellishment (553), his jettisoning of some attendant details of Jesus' resurrection story is at odds with the very hypothesis he proves.

### The Wider Issue of Inerrancy

One might rightly wonder why Licona's book is so controversial when the majority of it is excellent. Why not focus criticism solely on the numerous books about Jesus' resurrection that have extremely liberal views on the Gospels (as Licona does in chapter five)? The reason is that Licona's book mostly fits so well within the confines of conservative evangelical beliefs, including biblical inerrancy, yet it has some parts that definitely do not. Thus, some scholars who hold these beliefs are rightly compelled to point out the differences. Although addressing a different subject, Craig Keener gives a pertinent explanation: social conflict theory demonstrates that often when two parties agree on most issues they generate much friction when discussing their differences.<sup>3</sup>

Licona is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), as is this reviewer. ETS members must annually affirm a belief statement that includes the inerrancy of the Bible in its autographs as defined by the 1978 Chicago Statement

<sup>2</sup>Licona, “An Open Response.”

<sup>3</sup>Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 230.

on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI);<sup>4</sup> however, this reviewer does not believe Licona's problematic beliefs mentioned above are compatible with the CSBI. In 1983 members of ETS voted to ask Robert Gundry to resign, but in 2003 the motions to ask John Sanders and Clark Pinnock to resign failed to garner the needed votes. These three votes were all about aberrant views on biblical inspiration. Although Licona's views are nowhere near the erroneous nature or number of Gundry's, Sanders's, or Pinnock's views, there is a connection. The failed votes about Sanders and Pinnock likely indicate there are some evangelical scholars in ETS with unorthodox views on biblical inerrancy, and Licona's book is proof of that trend. There are some conservative evangelical scholars who claim to be of like mind but instead espouse some views about the Bible that do not fit within the confines of the CSBI. Geisler addresses this troubling erosion of the belief in biblical inerrancy and the need for vigilance against this erosion in his new book *Defending Inerrancy*.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars respond that there is no problem with Licona's book because these are nitpicking issues or that the CSBI needs further revision or nuancing.<sup>6</sup> However, this reviewer believes the CSBI remains a sufficient explanation of biblical inerrancy, and the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is important enough to continually defend and clearly define for each generation. Thus, Licona's book presents a challenge and calls for a response.

### Conclusion

*The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* is comprehensive in scope and commendable in many respects. Conservative evangelical Christians will agree with the majority of it, and for the most part Licona effectively argues for the truthfulness of Jesus' physical, bodily resurrection. Nonbelievers will find much well-reasoned food for thought in this book. Scholars, ministers, and students can all benefit from this well-researched book. However, it is unfortunate that some of Licona's biblical interpretations run counter to his central claim.

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***A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God.* By Andreas J. Köstenberger. *Biblical Theology of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 652 pages. Hardcover, \$39.99.**

Andreas Köstenberger is a well-known evangelical scholar who has published a significant body of work on the Gospel of John. Among other significant roles, he serves as Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Köstenberger is the editor of a new series called *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Since *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* is the first volume in the series, Köstenberger is able to describe the distinctive approach of the

<sup>4</sup>"Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, Inc., [http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article\\_Display\\_Page/0,,PTID307086\\_CHID750054\\_CIID2094584,00.html](http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086_CHID750054_CIID2094584,00.html) (Accessed 9 January 2012); "ETS Constitution," Evangelical Theological Society, <http://www.etsjets.org/about/constitution> (Accessed 17 January 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>Ross, "A Grave Debate," 14.

series and provide the first example of the fruitfulness of the approach.

Having acknowledged that biblical theology is a field that stands in need of definition (26), Köstenberger sees a need for biblical theology that rests upon a solid foundation (45). Biblical theology's foundation should be both historical and literary. Consideration of historical elements, like "authorship and historical setting," is important if biblical theology is to maintain a close connection to history (45). Similarly, sensitivity to literary concerns, like genre and pivotal points of the narrative/discourse, connects biblical theology to a "close reading" of the biblical text (26). Attention to literary elements of the text is especially important, because they point to the "programmatic sections" where the author highlights his central theological concerns (47–50). As a result, Köstenberger structures his book so as to build the foundation first and then proceed to his treatment of theological themes. He proceeds from historical foundation to literary foundation in chapters 1–3. Then, chapters 4–5 provide a useful "literary-theological" overview of the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John. These chapters anticipate much of what comes later.

Chapters 6–15 treat central themes of John's Gospel and Epistles. The ordering of the chapters brings out a correspondence between John's themes and the "programmatic sections" of his narrative (48–50). Since Jesus as Messiah and Jesus' signs connect to John's purpose statement (John 20:30–31), they are considered first (chapter 7). Next comes themes associated with the beginning of John (1:1–18), like new creation and John's doctrine of God (chapters 8–9). In third place are the themes associated with the "preamble to part two" of John's Gospel (13:1–3; see pp. 49–50), including ethics and the cross (chapters 13–14). Furthermore, within each chapter, Köstenberger generally follows the development of each theological theme through the major sections of John's narrative so that one can see how John develops the theme.

The strength of Köstenberger's plan of organization is clear enough. It shows how John's theological points are connected to the structure and progress of the narrative. The plan also comes with a couple of liabilities that Köstenberger tries to mitigate. First, Köstenberger's organization creates the impression of a closer focus upon the Gospel of John and neglect of his epistles. Second, some of John's themes are not easy to develop by following the narrative of John's Gospel. Sometimes, John repeats earlier points or provides the central elements of a theme in such a way that it helps to compare the relevant verses side by side, even if they occur several chapters apart. As a result, Köstenberger's approach works best when he helps the reader to follow a theme through the narrative by drawing special attention to a theme's high points or by connecting later aspects of a theme to earlier ones. His treatment of the fulfillment of the Passover is a good example (414–20). In some cases, a stronger summary section might help to draw together John's points related to a particular theme. For example, the section on the Spirit would probably benefit from a stronger summary to help the reader to incorporate the central emphases of John's theology.

Given the vast scope of the book, Köstenberger covers a lot of ground and does so with clarity and a strategic use of charts. The contents often line up with the emphases of Köstenberger's own work on the Gospel of John, like his concern for historical issues and John's use of the Old Testament (chapters 1, 6). One area in which the book seems to be a bit light is in its treatment of John's teaching regarding the cross. Some of the themes related to the cross are already treated by the time one gets to the cross in chapter 14. Chapter 14 does not do justice to the theme in its own right and could do a better job of drawing together elements from previous

chapters. Yet this is really a small criticism of a book that handles so many themes and does so admirably.

As Köstenberger notes early on, the theology of John's writings has been generally neglected in New Testament scholarship, especially in comparison to Pauline theology (28). Köstenberger here makes a very significant contribution to Johannine theology. His work is carefully crafted and readable. Someone who wishes to preach or teach on the Gospel of John (or his epistles) would benefit from reading Köstenberger's literary-theological overview (chapters 10, 11). Then, one could use the chapters on theological themes to bring out John's theological emphases. Köstenberger's work is an insightful and trustworthy guide for anyone who wants to engage more seriously with the theology of John's writings.

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### Theological Studies

***God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology.* By Oliver D. Crisp. New York: T&T Clark, 2009. 192 pages. Softcover, 34.95.**

Oliver Crisp's *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* examines a set of historic and contemporary doctrinal problems regarding the person of Christ, specifically those problems related to the incarnation. As "an exercise in analytic theology," Crisp borrows certain technical resources and the general rigor of contemporary analytic philosophy in order to construct a logically coherent apology for orthodox Christology in light of contemporary advancements in philosophy and science, an effort he refers to as "retrieving doctrine" (1–3). As in his other works on Christology, Crisp's *God Incarnate* sets out to "interrogate, correct, and amend contemporary theological myopia" (15).

Following "a traditional dogmatic ordering of Christological topics," Crisp's work falls into eight chapters (4). In brief, they are: "Christological Method"; "The Election of Jesus Christ"; "The Pre-Existence of Christ"; "The 'Fittingness' of the Virgin Birth"; "Christ and the Embryo"; "Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?"; "Materialist Christology"; and "Multiple Incarnations." That Crisp's methodology and objective might be made clear I consider the first two chapters in some detail.

First, consider the logical priority of the Christological method and the sources of authority that inform it found in chapter one. Here, Crisp introduces the reader to a complex of questions regarding the proper place of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience for theological construction. Crisp appeals to a four-fold hierarchical authority structure (17). Beginning with Scripture, what he refers to as the "final arbiter of matters theological," he then appeals in descending order of authoritative value to the (first seven) ecumenical statements of the Christian church (e.g. the Chalcedonian Creed of 451), Confessions and conciliar statements (e.g. the Westminster Confession of 1646 or the Belgic Confession of 1561), and lastly, to *Theologoumena* or theological opinions expressed by theologians of the church (e.g. Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, or Karl Barth). Crisp then proceeds to a helpful section titled, "Christology from above and below" and another called "high and low Christology." These categorical distinctions describe, without delimiting, a number of representatively active approaches to contemporary Christology. It is clear from chapter one that Crisp sets out these certain, clear structures for the theological task

in a manner broad enough to invite those of various traditions to consider a series of legitimate and urgent problems that face contemporary Christianity. This is by far the most pedagogical chapter of the work. Though not perhaps as scrutinizing and rigorous as the others, this chapter is certainly the most accessible. It is carefully written and highly instructive and perhaps ought to be well read twice before proceeding with the rest of the work.

Next, consider the controversy that surrounds the Reformed doctrine of the election of Jesus Christ in chapter two. This is the idea that “election depends in some important and substantive sense on Christ’s merit” (38). Chapter two contains four parts. In part one, Crisp offers a historical survey (one that certainly overcomes criticisms to the analytic program as being ahistorical) of the doctrine of election in Reformed theology with particular emphasis on the dogmatic theological developments of the post-Reformation. And carefully working through a number of confessional statements and *theologoumena*, he illumines what he labels, “the conservative Reformed position” (36). That is, the position that Christ’s (atoning) work is the mechanism by which the divine decree to elect obtains (37). In the course of his exposition, he points out that not all in the Reformed tradition speak with the one voice on the matter. Some, he observes, like those of the French, “Amyraldian” wing of the Reformed tradition, make certain (and often very subtle) distinctions at this point, claiming inverse to the conservative position that Christ’s work is the “causal factor” by which election obtains (36). In part two, Crisp lays out a series of instructive propositions from the work of the seventeenth century Swiss theologian, Francis Turretin in favor of the conservative Reformed position. In so doing, Crisp illumines the subtle but important distinctions of the various Reformed positions on the doctrine of Christ’s election. In the third part, Crisp develops an argument for what he calls a “moderate reformed position,” one that makes sense of the disparate theological opinions in Reformed theology. In the fourth and final part, Crisp considers the contemporary value of his position in light of certain Barthian ideals. Though the meticulousness of this chapter may repel some, there is great reward awaiting the careful and patient reader. And these chapters are archetypical for what the reader will find in each successive chapter.

Of the many virtues of Crisp’s work, its accessibility and great reservoir of content are its chief marks. However, those who set out to profit from Crisp’s mental labor will not find easy answers to hard questions in *God Incarnate* (or any of Crisp’s other works for that matter). *God Incarnate* is an invitation to *think* through contemporary Christological problems *with* Crisp. An invitation of this value beckons a clear response

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***Christ the Key.* By Kathryn Tanner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 309 pages. Paperback, \$29.99.**

Kathryn Tanner in her work *Christ the Key* offers a theological feast for those interested in historical Christian theology and systematic appropriation of it for present purposes. In exemplary fashion she constructs theology by dialoging with the early church fathers, and considering pre-critical and critical forms of scriptural scholarship for contemporary purposes. Readers may disagree with her especially

as it pertains to her Platonic foundations/assumptions, political conclusions, and views on the atonement, but the reader ought not to reject her insights, skill, and method outright. Theologians and philosophers of religion have much to gain from her through dialogic interaction.

As the title suggests, the reader will quickly note the theme of the book, namely *Christ is the Key*. More specifically, Tanner argues for the notion that God fulfills his desire to give us all good things in Christ, which is keeping with her previous systematic theology, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity* (vii). She begins the discussion by showing how Christ unlocks for us the mysteries of human nature by drawing from the likes of Augustine, Aquinas, Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus, and Athanasius, in a strongly neo-platonic fashion Tanner seeks to answer how it is that Christ is the “image of God” and how Christ fulfills our human nature as it is intended in the Genesis narrative. Her specific contribution in this chapter is a more explicit appropriation and fusion of neo-Platonism and Christological theologizing that is arguably unique in the contemporary theological scene and an extension beyond the expressed views of many theologians in history, thus serving as the foundation for the rest of the book.

In chapter 2, she considers the nature of God’s grace in relation to man’s nature, the good in nature, and the problem of sin by considering the discussion between Catholics and Protestants. Chapter 3, Tanner considers other issues related to grace specifically as it concerns the Catholic understanding of natural desire inherited from an Aristotelian ontology of final causes, arguing that this creates a two-tier system within divine providence. In an almost Barthian manner chapter 4 on the “Trinitarian Life” is concerned with the abstract relations of the trinity in view of Christ’s redemptive role with humanity (174). Chapter 5 is concerned with socio-political issues not from an abstract Trinitarian perspective, as is common in much modern theology, but from a concrete Christological perspective. In chapter 6 Tanner discusses a cluster of controversial issues surrounding the atonement. Finally, Tanner considers the debate on the work of the Spirit in chapter 7 as either mediate or immediate.

Every chapter is full of insight and constructive engagement with contemporary literature and church history, yet there are two noteworthy examples worth mentioning here. First, Tanner argues that humans are the image of God in a weak and strong sense. Humans are the image in a weak sense as all creatures are, yet to a greater extent and in a strong sense only by grace in Christ. Debatable issues worth interacting with further include Tanner’s interpretation of the “image” and the substantial nature of humans theologically. While debatable there is much insight and fresh thinking deserving reflection. Second, Tanner contributes to the discussion over the divide between nature and grace, within the Catholic-Protestant dialogue, by arguing the solution for sin and nature is the same—grace. Although interesting, this solution does not fare with the biblical portrayal of sin as the immediate reason for grace or the moral foundations of sin, responsibility, and the need for atonement.

One criticism is the book’s lack of a clear moral framework undergirding responsibility and sin, thus lending itself to a confused view of the atonement. A moral framework that includes the notion of retribution or some modified form of retribution can coherently be accounted for by either a satisfaction or penal model of the atonement, views that Tanner dismisses without justification.

In the end, Tanner’s work is deserving of thoughtful engagement. The need for



evangelical encounter is clear when it comes to bringing scriptural portrayals of sin, morality, and the atonement to bear on the contemporary setting. Not only that but evangelicals may learn much from Kathryn Tanner regardless.

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***The Return of Christ: A Premillennial Perspective.* Edited by David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011. 285 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

Among today's pastors and theologians there seems to be an apathetic attitude toward the events surrounding the return of Christ. The contributors to *The Return of Christ: A Premillennial Perspective* confront this apathy, arguing that the Scriptures reveal a premillennial understanding of Christ's second advent. The essays are the result of the Acts 1:11 Conference which was held over two days in November of 2009 at North Metro First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, and co-sponsored by Jerry Vines Ministries and a number of Baptist seminaries and a Baptist college. The book is divided into two parts: part one includes the seven presentations from the conference while part two includes five additional scholarly reflections on premillennialism.

Vines' brief article introduces the good news announcement of Acts 1:11. The announcement involves the person of Jesus Himself who has promised to return to the earth for His saints. Those who await the fulfillment of the promise are to worship, work, and eagerly wait for the promise to come about. After a brief argument that any viable eschatological position must include the affirmation of Christ's return, Ergun Caner surveys six views of the return of Christ and the throne of David. Then he offers five reasons for understanding Jesus' return as premillennial. Danny Akin argues for a pretribulation rapture, a position that he writes is even more opposed today than premillennialism (49). He surveys five views on the time of the rapture, concentrating on the concept of imminency within pretribulationism. Akin concludes, "If a person rejects pretribulationism, he must either deny imminency or redefine the tribulation" (55). In his discussion of the three figures in Revelation 12, Paige Patterson discusses Israel's unique role during the tribulation, which he describes as "God's final appeal to sinful humanity" (71). David Allen argues that numerous Old Testament and New Testament texts describe a future millennial reign of Christ upon the earth and concludes that the "hermeneutics of amillennialism simply cannot account for the national and geopolitical aspects of these Old Testament prophecies of blessings" (78). The subject of Richard Land's essay is God's judgment as described in Revelation 20–22. Distinguishing between the temporal place of torment known as Hades and the eternal lake of fire known as hell, Land affirms the devastating judgment of unbelievers in Revelation 20 and the promise of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21–22), in which the redeemed will live with God forever. In light of the response of the two men in Acts 1:11, Junior Hill exhorts believers to not be like the disciples who, in gazing into the sky, were asking the wrong question, looking in the wrong direction, and laboring in the wrong power.

Stanton Norman begins the five articles of part two with an introductory survey of eschatology. In a section on individual eschatology, he discusses what the Bible says concerning death, the intermediate state, and resurrection. Then he covers

corporate themes such as the kingdom of God, the day of the Lord, and the certainty and manner of Christ's return. Norman completes the chapter suggesting some ways in which eschatology has implications for life and godliness. Craig Blaising defends premillennialism by arguing that Old Testament descriptions of the kingdom and the coming day of the Lord indicate a two-phased kingdom, one that is temporarily in existence between the time of Christ's return and the final judgment, and one that is eternal and follows the consummative judgment of sin and death (143–45). He argues that Paul's multiple-stages description of the resurrection and the two-phased resurrection described in Revelation 20 also point to the two-phase kingdom idea. Lamar Cooper investigates "the pre-Christian development of aspects of the messianic movement in the Old Testament as a foundation for understanding the Second Coming of the Messiah" (160–61). He argues that there are both implicit and explicit examples of the second coming in the Old Testament and offers an extensive treatment of Zechariah 12–14 as inextricably linked to Jesus' Olivet Discourse (176–92, 204–05). Steven Cox continues the discussion of the Olivet discourse by discussing the implications of Jesus' words on eschatology. He also discusses eschatological passages in the fourth gospel that deal with false messiahs, eternal life, and the judgment of believers and nonbelievers, respectively. In the final chapter, Michael Vlach discusses the primary themes of eschatology within Pauline theology, distinguishing between those aspects which are present in the church age and those which are reserved for a future time. In discussing Paul's theology of the covenants and the people of God, Vlach focuses on the Jew/Gentile ethnic distinction within Paul's writings (239–48). He also discusses Paul's understanding of future events related to the day of the Lord, the temple, the gathering of the saints, bodily resurrection, judgment, the kingdom, and the future role of the nation of Israel.

There are a few minor ways in which the contributors' positions could have been stronger. Caner is correct to point out the nuanced differences between premillennialism and dispensationalism and between amillennialism and preterism, respectively. In distinguishing millennial views, however, these nuances are perhaps not necessary. He could have also been clearer in his defense of "the imminence of premillennialism" (38–45) by stating that he is arguing for pretribulational premillennialism, which includes both the premillennial position and dispensational position as he has described them. Also, the language about hell that Steven Cox employs could be better stated (222, 234). Nonetheless, he is correct to point out the distinction between Hades and the eternal lake of fire (hell).

As a whole, the work should be commended for its fairness. When opposing positions are described, they are usually done so in an accurate manner and in an irenic tone. Still, Caner's description of the positions of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:16–18) as "a form of amillennialism or preterism" (27) is perhaps anachronistic and incorrect. While pointing out numerous helpful intertextual connections, Cooper may overstate his case regarding explicit affirmations and signs of the second coming in certain Old Testament texts. Allen argues that the earthly events described in certain Old Testament texts can only be fulfilled during the millennium (79–80). It could have been added here that there are new creation premillennialists who understand the millennium as a transition to the new heaven and new earth and thus see more continuity between the present earthly state and the eternal state of the new creation.

These relatively minor points of disagreement do not take away from the contribution that has been made by each writer and the value of the work as a whole.

Whether it is among dispensational premillennialists or among its detractors, future discussion of eschatology will benefit from *The Return of Christ*. The work includes both introductory and advanced material, giving it a wide range of accessibility. While some redundancy is to be expected in a work like the present one, the editors and contributors have done well to minimize it by keeping their respective contributions focused, allowing the other contributors to cover other topics. The book accomplishes the very difficult feat of touching upon every major eschatological issue dealing with the return of Christ, and it does so with zeal and brevity.

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***A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to "Left Behind" Eschatology.* Edited by Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 208 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

Distinguished New Testament scholar Craig Blomberg and his colleague, Korean scholar Sung Wook Chung, have edited the latest apology for "historic premillennialism." However, the work is not totally apologetic in character, which is revealed by the polemical subtitle, "An Alternative to 'Left Behind' Eschatology." By "Left Behind" eschatology, Blomberg and Chung attempt to prejudice the reader from the outset by referencing the fiction of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in the popular series of novels about eschatology. The attempt is to wrap the dispensational premillennialist package with a "Left Behind" ribbon in the hope that the package will never be opened and seriously considered.

Contributors to the volume include a number of well-known evangelicals with historian Timothy Weber in the initial historical survey of competing premillennial movements. Richard Hess adds a chapter on "The Old Testament and the Millennium," followed by a chapter on "Judaism and the World to Come," which does little to address the actual subject of the book but in other ways may be the best chapter in the book. Then Craig Blomberg writes, "The Post-tribulationsim of the New Testament: Leaving 'Left Behind' Behind," followed by the perceptive chapter by Don J. Payne on "The Theological Method of Premillennialism." Donald Fairbairn asks the historic question about the early church and its position regarding contemporary millennial and tribulation debates, while Sung Wook Chung argues that Reformed and Covenantal theology can certainly embrace a form of premillennialism without compromise to its own principles. The final chapter by Oscar Campos places premillennialism within a holistic missiology in the Latin American context.

Like most such books, the chapters differ in their respective contributions. Weber's assessment of the history of the millennial movements breaks no new ground but does succeed in providing a readable and succinct account of the oft-repeated history of the two movements. Generally, he is fair, except for some assessments such as, "Sometimes all that was needed to keep the dispensationalist rank and file happy was a good second edition. Dispensationalists have proven themselves to be quite willing to forgive and forget their teachers' mistakes, and they seem eager to accept new explanations" (18). One need only respond that the same thing might be said of "historic premillennialism" as well as other positions. Furthermore, Weber complains that part of the problem is that "dispensationalists simply have a better story to tell" (21). Such special pleading falls short of scholarly assessment.

The chapter by Richard Hess, "The Future Written in the Past," makes the point that the whole discussion is not just about Revelation 20. Hess, in one of the shorter chapters, points to the Old Testament text as the basis for millenarianism. Hélène Dallaire's chapter, "Judaism and the World to Come," is probably the most informative chapter in the entire book. There are places where she is perhaps less than forthright in her representation of dispensationalism, but she does bring a wealth of information from Jewish sources such as the Talmud and the *Pseudepigrapha* that are rarely seen in a book of this nature. Furthermore, she has clearly grasped the content of these and provides significant wisdom. Blomberg's chapter on the post-tribulation view of the New Testament basically is no more than a recounting of what has been said by a large number of scholars before him. If one is looking for new insight, this chapter is probably the most disappointing in the book.

Don Payne's chapter, "The Theological Method of Premillennialism," is a fair assessment and is worth the price of the book. The chapter will be valuable to premillennialists of all stripes. Donald Fairbairn's chapter on the witness of the early church, by which he means the developing church after the first century, is fair and accurate but fails to mention the fact that the early church, while closer to the New Testament than anyone else, still got some things wrong. For example, it is difficult to believe that Ignatius's advocacy for episcopacy represents the New Testament pattern. The issue ultimately is not how the early church conceived anything although their witness is important. The issue remains: What does the Bible teach? In Sung Wook Chung's chapter on premillennialism among the Reformed, he not only documents the fact that there have been Reformed scholars who have also been premillennial, but also provides an adequate assessment of why such a position is entirely plausible within the contours of the Reformed faith. Finally, the chapter by Oscar Campos takes the whole matter into the Latin American arena where Christianity is growing rapidly and brings to bear the insights of particular theologians such as Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar, and Emilio Antonio Núñez.

As a general statement favoring post-tribulation-premillennialism and as a polemic against pretribulation-premillennialism, the book is standard with the same arguments being repeated from the past, differing only in that they are less effectively presented in this volume. On the other hand, some legitimately new ground is broken, and there are insights to be gained from several of the chapters, as mentioned above. Roger Olson, Craig Keener, and J. Andrew Dearman all provide glowing affirmations of the volume, and Baker Academic Press adds viability for those who wish to have a survey of the present waterfront in eschatological studies. While I can certainly commend the book as the kind of reading that seminary students and pastors ought to encounter, the book must be read with a couple of continuing questions in the mind of the reader. First, "Is this really a fair presentation of the opposing position?" and second, "Have the authors of these chapters actually succeeded in painting a compelling picture for 'historic premillennialism?'" This reviewer's conclusion, while itself undoubtedly biased, would find the overall drift of the case less than compelling.

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## Historical Studies

***Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians.* By Ambrosiaster. Edited and Translated by Gerald L. Bray. Ancient Christian Texts. IVP Academic, 2009. 270 pages. Hardcover, \$60.00.**

Gerald L. Bray, Research Professor of Divinity History and Doctrine at Beeson Divinity School, provides the first English translation of Ambrosiaster's commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians. Ambrosiaster was the earliest Latin exegete who produced commentaries on the entire Pauline corpus. Unlike Ambrose, his Latin contemporary, Ambrosiaster does not have any interest in an allegorical reading of Romans and 1–2 Corinthians.

To read Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on Romans* may be a big surprise to many contemporary evangelicals who might have believed that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was completely lost during the patristic era but restored later during the Protestant Reformation. This work is replete with Ambrosiaster's frequent appeal to justification by faith alone without the works of the law (Rom 3:24 [29]; 4:5[32]; 9:28[80]; 11:32[93]). He uses not only the concept but also the actual term *sola fide* more frequently than does any patristic writer. Ambrosiaster's *sola fide* could be clear evidence of the continuity between Paul and fourth century Latin Christianity on justification by faith alone apart from works. On the other hand, Catholic readers would reject such an evangelical reading of Ambrosiaster, since he sometimes uses the term 'the works of the law' as a reference to the ritual observation of the Mosaic law, such as circumcision and the Sabbath (Rom 4:4[31]; 9:28[80]). Therefore, Catholics could argue that Ambrosiaster's *sola fide sine operibus legis* is not his rejection of good works as a necessary ingredient of justification but simply his condemnation of the social and religious exclusivism of first century Judaism. However, does Ambrosiaster's reference to the Jewish ceremonial law as the works of the law necessarily mean that he admits good works are an essential condition to justification? The critical question we have to ask is not about whether Ambrosiaster's *sola fide* intends to exclude the Jewish ritual regulations as a necessary channel by which man is justified. Instead, the question must concern whether Ambrosiaster ever argues that the exclusion of the ceremonial laws is all that Paul meant regarding the lack of salvation by the works of the law. Abraham's *sola fide* shows not only ceremonial law but also that the moral sanctity to avoid evil does not contribute anything to his justification (Rom 3:24[29]; 4:31[37]) Not only pre- but also post-justification merits cannot cause believers to be justified (Rom 4:4[31]). Another interesting aspect of Ambrosiaster's commentary on Romans is a striking theological agreement between Ambrosiaster and Augustine who attributed Ambrosiaster's commentary to Hilary and honored this work. Ambrosiaster teaches the doctrine of original sin and guilt inherited from Adam by interpreting Romans 5:12. Everyone already sinned "in Adam as though in a lump" (Rom 5:12[40]). Evil is "the perversion of what is good" (Rom 7:18[58]).

In *Commentary on 1–2 Corinthians*, Ambrosiaster holds the Roman church's tradition on rebaptism and rejects Novatianists and the Donatists who practiced rebaptism. Like Ignatius, he strongly advocates the monarchy of a bishop as the "head" of the church (1 Cor 1:17[123]). Those who will be "saved only as through fire" (1 Cor 3:15[134]) are not heretics but some Christians who simply followed false teachings. These Christians will be purified through the punishment of fire,

although they will not be reprov'd eternally in hell. Ambrosiaster's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 3:15 anticipates the later Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Ambrosiaster has a concept of congregational discipline based on 1 Corinthians 5:4 but also maintains the administrative leadership of a bishop in that congregational discipline. Modern readers of Ambrosiaster will be disappointed concerning his discrimination of women in the matter of divorce. He does not allow a woman to remarry even though she divorces her husband because of his fornication and even apostasy. However, a man can remarry if he divorces a sinful wife because "the headband [the superior party in the law] is not restricted by the law as a woman [the inferior party] is, *for the head of the woman is her husband*" (1 Cor 7:11[151]). Ambrosiaster could be called an ancient complementarian: "He is greater than she is by cause and order, not by substance" (1 Cor 11:5[172]). Unlike modern paedobaptists, Ambrosiaster interprets the holiness of the children born from a Christian parent as meaning the legitimacy of their birth from a lawful marriage, not any theological ground for infant baptism. It is historically worth noticing that 1 Corinthians 7:14 had not been a universal exegetical basis for the legitimacy of infant baptism until the mid-fourth century in Latin Christianity although infant baptism was being practiced. Despite Bray's argument that Ambrosiaster is "not a 'cessationist' in a modern sense" (xvi), Ambrosiaster seems not to differ from modern cessationists in understanding the nature of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. He does not teach or even imply that tongues could be incomprehensible utterances or the languages of angels. Ambrosiaster is the first orthodox patristic writer in the history of Christianity who believed that some Christians in the day of Paul were really baptized on behalf of the dead because of their fear that "someone who was not baptized would either not rise at all or else rise merely in order to be condemned" (1 Cor 15:29[196]). Paul did not endorse that erroneous practice but used it as an illustration of "a firm faith in the resurrection" (1 Cor 15: 29[196]).

Ambrosiaster's commentary on 2 Corinthians is relatively short, and the length of this commentary would be only half of his commentary on 1 Corinthians. He is not aware of limited atonement or double predestination. For him God never wanted anyone to be excluded from his gift of redemption. If there are some unbelievers, it is because they did not receive the gospel. In his exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, Ambrosiaster explained the incarnation well, as Christ's assumption of the nature which was not previously his but now added to his divine nature. The incarnation was necessary in a sense because our human nature became sinful and needed to be redeemed by his death. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster followed Athanasius and other Greek fathers in interpreting the incarnation in the context of deification. Christ humiliated his almighty status "so that he might obtain for men the riches of divinity and thus share in the divine nature, as Peter says [in 2 Pet 1:4]. He was made man in order to take man into the Godhead. As it is written: I have said, you are gods [Ps 82:6]" (2 Cor 8:9[237–38]). Both biblical verses are well-known proof-texts for the Greek fathers' understanding of salvation as deification. This shows us not to exaggerate the theological gap between Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity. In addition, we can infer that Augustine could have learned the doctrine of deification primarily from his own Latin tradition rather than the Latin translations of the Eastern patristic writings.

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***Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon.* By Ambrosiaster. Translated and Edited by Gerald L. Bray. Ancient Christian Texts. IVP Academic, 2009. 166 pages. Hardcover, \$60.00.**

This volume contains commentaries on ten Pauline epistles from Galatians through Philemon. The translator's introduction in this volume is the same as that in *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*. Like *Commentary on Romans*, as well, *Commentary on Galatians* is an important work in understanding Ambrosiaster's doctrine of justification by faith alone. In Galatians 1:4, Ambrosiaster refers to union with Christ through forgiveness, which is possible by faith. Whoever is under the law is cursed whether he is under the ceremonial law or the moral law because the law of God requires us to obey all its requests. Therefore, Ambrosiaster laments, "the [moral] commandments are so great that it is impossible to keep them" (Gal 3:10[16]). *Sola fide* does away with human pride because man is always justified before God with imputed, not earned, righteousness by faith alone. Paul presents Abraham as an "example" of "imputed [*inputari*]" righteousness "not by the work of the law, but by faith" (Gal 3:6[15]). Ambrosiaster uses the same verb '*inputo*' in another place (Gal 3:21[20]). However, Bray's rendering of that Latin word in Galatians 3:21 as "reckoned" weakens Ambrosiaster's keen perspective of the legal aspect of justifying righteousness. Nevertheless, readers must remember that Ambrosiaster, long before Luther, already understood the importance of imputed righteousness by faith alone, not by merits.

Ambrosiaster draws attention to the cosmic aspect of the gospel in Ephesians 3. Through Paul's preaching that proclaimed the revelation of Christ, God wants to "impress the spirits in the heavenly places, who are the principalities and powers" (Eph 3:10[44]). The preaching ministry of the church is beneficial to the heavenly spirits who are serving Satan under his tyranny. The gospel challenges them to "turn away from their error" and "renounce their allegiance to the devil's tyranny" (Eph 3:10[44]). However, Ambrosiaster does not speak of whether they will truly repent and be saved after hearing Paul's preaching of Christ. Ambrosiaster's exegesis of the gifts of Christ for the church in Ephesians 4 reveals that some Roman Christians in the fourth century realized the leadership structure of their catholic church differed from that of the New Testament church. Ambrosiaster tries to justify his church's deviation from Paul by appealing to the temporality of some in ecclesiastical leadership in first century Christianity. He argues, "By apostles Paul means bishops, and by prophets he means expositors of the Scriptures" (Eph 4:10[48]). Without denying that the New Testament spoke of prophets like Agabus who exactly predicted the things that would occur in the future, Ambrosiaster points out the temporality of the foretelling function of prophets. They were given only "in order to support the beginnings of the faith" (Eph 4:11[49]). In other words, such a function is no longer necessary in the advanced life of the church. To call the expositors of the Bible prophets is not wrong at all because they reveal the hidden meanings of the Bible and speak of the future hope that is not yet realized. Evangelists are "deacons" like Philip and Stephen who freely preach without having a fixed ecclesiastical see. Pastors are not bishops but the "readers" who "instruct the people with readings" (Eph 4:11[49]). Teachers are the "exorcists" who "restrain and beat the unruly" (Eph 4:11[49]). All these different functions are found in the bishop who is the chief prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher in the church.

In order to explain why his contemporary church is different from the New

Testament church in practice and leadership, Ambrosiaster emphasizes that his church is in a dispensation different from the New Testament church. God allowed everyone to preach, baptize, and even interpret the Bible in order to make the church grow everywhere. However, the church is now established everywhere and needs a system to maintain an order in the church. Therefore, deacons are no longer able to preach or baptize, and people should not be anointed on any day. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster admitted that bishops and elders are not two different positions but interchangeable in the New Testament.

In the exegesis of Phil. 2:9, Ambrosiaster strongly condemns adoptionism: “If Christ is not God but a man adopted as a mighty son of God, what is the point of Paul’s preaching on humility? A man and every other creature must be humble. There should be no praise for someone who humbled himself before God. Likewise, if Christ was not God but a man, what is a striking element of his being in the likeness of a man? Is every man not in the same likeness?” (Phil 2:9[71]).

If the theology of Ambrosiaster in his commentary on Romans has an Augustinian element concerning original sin, the theology of Ambrosiaster in his commentary on 1 Timothy has an Arminian element concerning free will. For Ambrosiaster, no grace exists that man cannot resist. After reminding his readers of the biblical truth that God wants everyone to be saved (1 Tim 2:4), Ambrosiaster asks, then, why is His will not fulfilled as He wishes? He answers his own question: “God wants everyone to be saved, but only if they come to him. He does not want this if it means that people are saved when they do not want to be” (1 Tim 2:4[125]). There is no true salvation without voluntary acceptance on the part of sinners. Ambrosiaster refuses to understand the salvific power of the gospel as if it is a physical force or a medicine for the body. Indeed, the gospel is powerful, but it is a “spiritual medicine” that requires the “mind” of its recipients to accept it “with total willingness” (1 Tim. 2:4[125]). Since the church is the great house of God containing not only gold silver but also wood vessels, Ambrosiaster reprimands the Novatians for their ecclesiology of the pure church (2 Tim 2:20[148]). It is not surprising to note that later Augustine condemned the Donatists who claimed their pure church by using the same verse.

Ambrosiaster’s exegesis of 1 and 2 Thessalonians shows his eschatology. Concerning the second coming of Christ, Ambrosiaster warns his audience not to be deceived easily by those who pretend as if they receive special revelation from the Holy Spirit as the Montanists did. Since God is not self-contradictory, whatever the Spirit reveals is not to be contradictory with the written Word of God. However, Ambrosiaster has no perspective of the millennial kingdom on earth as an intermediate stage between Christ’s *parousia* and eternity, although advocating the literal eternal punishment of sinners in hell. Paul also warned, according to Ambrosiaster, that Christians should not receive any book written in the name of the apostles naively because false teachers tried to deceive them with spurious authority. Interestingly, Ambrosiaster regards the fall of the Roman Empire as the last event of the world right before the second coming of Christ:

“The Lord would not come back until the Roman Empire fell and the anti-christ appeared, who would kill the saints and give the Romans back their freedom, but under his name” (2 Thess 2: 1–4 [115]).

If we expect a contemporary commentator’s critical analysis of a word or syntax from Ambrosiaster, we will definitely be disappointed. If we look for a practical implication of a passage from his commentaries, as with the NIV Application Com-



mentary series, we will be also disappointed. However, if we want to know how early Christians, who were closer to Paul than we are, understood Paul without having the presuppositions of contemporary readership on Paul, this volume will greatly help us. This volume also provides many valuable details about Roman Christianity in the fourth century.

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***The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology.* By James R. Ginther. Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 207 pages. Paperback, \$30.00.**

In his 1954 inaugural lecture as the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Cambridge University, C.S. Lewis remarked that a former student once described the Middle Ages as a “dark surging sea.” Observing the changes in historical scholarship that led to the creation of his academic chair at Cambridge, Lewis recognized that this “great, dark surging sea of the Middle Ages” had come to flood the continent of the Renaissance period. Although scholars had once contrasted the darkness of the Middle Ages with the enlightened Renaissance, they were coming to recognize the continuity between these eras. (C.S. Lewis, “De Descriptione Temporum,” in *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses* [London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962], 10).

It seems today that the floodwaters of this “dark surging sea” have now risen, in scholarly circles, to the heights of modernity and postmodernity. Following in the footsteps of historian Heiko Oberman, many Reformation scholars recognize, despite the attempts of reformers to return to antiquity, that the Reformation grew out of the intellectual and theological climate of the late Middle Ages and that the theology of the reformers must be interpreted in this context. Moreover, in his study of early medieval Christianity, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, historian Peter Brown claims that the Western Christianity we have inherited took shape not in the Patristic period, but in the Middle Ages—even that early medieval period called the Dark Ages. (Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2003], 23–24).

In the introduction to *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology*, James R. Ginther testifies to our indebtedness to the Middle Ages. From this epoch we have inherited, among other things, universities, biblical concordances, and the ‘satisfaction theory’ of atonement as described by Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century (xi). The Middle Ages, however, now receive a mixed reception: Some look on this period with nostalgia, with longing for a lost Golden Age; others see it as an age when corrupt church leaders grasped political power while their flocks fumbled in spiritual darkness. Ginther has refused to accept either of these perspectives, choosing instead to describe the complexity of the age: “We recognize that there are some horrible features of the Middle Ages—just as there are in every age of human history—but there are also some fascinating ideas and arguments that ultimately still hold sway over (post)modern theology” (xii).

Despite the significance of the Middle Ages, many students, when they first study medieval theology, truly feel as if they stand at the brink of a “dark surging sea.” Fortunately, with *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* in hand,

the student may stay afloat as he confronts the strange world, the odd names, and the foreign theological systems and sensibilities of the Middle Ages. Indeed, while Ginther makes no claim to have written a comprehensive guide to medieval theology, his handbook is valuable as an introduction to the subject.

Ginther provides a useful introduction to his handbook, describing the nature and sources of medieval theology, as well as the method of his handbook. He avoids any definition of “medieval theology” that would incorrectly limit the term as a reference to scholastic theology alone. One can better understand the term by considering the “sources theologians read and used” in the Middle Ages, namely, “Scripture, the liturgy, and the early church fathers” (xiii–xiv). Contrary to the popular caricature of dusty intellects brimming with their own “clever arguments and minute distinctions,” medieval theologians appealed to Scripture as “first and foremost the singular source for theological work”: “[T]hose who commented on Scripture were also the ones who were interested in using reasoned arguments to make a theological point; conversely, those who excelled at argument were deeply immersed in the sacred page” (xiv). This is a welcome correction to the popular belief that the Bible was utterly passed over during the Middle Ages, but readers must always keep in mind the methods and assumptions with which medieval theologians approached Scripture. Some of these methods and assumptions led to an inappropriate use of Scripture by medieval theologians.

Describing the conventions of his handbook, Ginther notes “three basic categories” for the entries in his handbook: namely, “major Christian thinkers, socio-cultural developments, and key terms and concepts” (xix). Understandably, he tries to avoid anachronism by using only those terms which medieval theologians used, placing the Latin terms beside their English equivalent in each entry. Of course, this could have its own drawbacks. For example, this could lead people to assume that these terms were used consistently by medieval theologians to describe all of the concepts discussed in each entry. Ginther successfully avoids this pitfall, however, by relating the nuanced use of each term by various theologians in different periods.

Although some volumes in *The Westminster Handbook* series employ numerous experts to write entries, Ginther writes every entry in this volume. As a result, this handbook contains consistent, well-written prose entries, which clearly explain the theological, philosophical, and social intricacies of the Middle Ages. Speaking generally, Ginther’s entries on the “major Christian thinkers” of the medieval period are concise but helpful. They contain information about each theologian’s life, works, and key theological contributions. His entries on “sociocultural developments”—such as his articles on “Marriage” and “University”—are nuanced and enlightening, as are his entries on various “key terms and concepts.” He handles philosophical concepts with ease and clarity, and he often places key concepts within a helpful framework. For example, he discusses the various levels of social, ecclesiastical, and theological authority under one heading of “Authority,” thereby revealing the complex nature of authority in the Middle Ages.

A few other facets of *The Westminster Handbook to Medieval Theology* make it a helpful introduction to the field. Following his introduction, Ginther includes a discussion of “Resources for Studying Medieval Theology.” He notes some of the most helpful, comprehensive and up-to-date secondary sources on medieval theology and informs readers where to access primary sources. He includes several online resources, such as JSTOR and Iter Italicum. At the end of this volume, Ginther also includes a 10-page bibliography of useful sources. He also refers to appropriate

sources at the end of each entry within the handbook. Alongside Ginther's insightful introduction and entries, these facets of the volume make this *Westminster Handbook* a good resource for the novice who desires to dive into the "dark surging sea" of medieval theology.

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***A History of Biblical Interpretation, Volume 2: The Medieval through the Reformation Periods.* Edited by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, alongside Schuyler Kaufman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. 570 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.**

Surveying the rich and varied traditions of biblical interpretation during the medieval and Reformation periods, this second volume to *A History of Biblical Interpretation* is a valuable contribution to the library of any pastor or scholar. Even while affirming the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, a Bible student benefits by evaluating his own Scripture reading in light of past biblical interpretation, and this new collection of essays will greatly aid his task.

By drawing together essays on both medieval and Reformation exegesis into one volume, the editors of *A History of Biblical Interpretation* have portrayed two important insights: First, the editors recognize that the Middle Ages were not as dark as often assumed. Medieval scholars, both among Christians and Jews, read and taught Scripture, probing it for answers to a wide span of questions. They also labored for centuries to defend, preserve, and translate the Bible. Second, the editors recognize the connection between the medieval and Reformation periods: "The Renaissance and Reformation eras, much as they often claimed to be going back to the learning of the ancient period, firmly based their interpretive analyses on the achievements of Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Middle Ages" (vii–viii).

This volume consists not only in a collection of astute essays on biblical exegesis during the Middle Ages and the Reformation. It also provides helpful bibliographies and charts that point the reader to both primary and secondary resources accessible in print and on the internet. The volume also opens with a summary essay, assessing biblical exegesis during this period as a whole. Throughout the remainder of the book, scholars introduce the reader to a variety of interpretive traditions: Christian exegesis in the medieval West; Eastern Orthodox interpretation; Jewish exegesis; scholasticism and humanism; and exegetical traditions among both Protestant and Catholic reformers. Three chapters also highlight the transmission and translation of the texts of Scripture throughout the medieval and early modern periods.

Especially significant in this volume is an essay devoted to an often overlooked group of biblical expositors: the Anabaptists, with whom Baptists share a fundamental conviction concerning believer's baptism. In this essay, Stuart W. Murray, author of *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Pandora, 2000), outlines six characteristics of Anabaptist hermeneutics: "Scripture is Self-Interpreting"; "Christocentrism"; "The Two Testaments"; "Spirit and Word"; "Congregational Hermeneutics"; and the "Hermeneutics of Obedience" (408–23). The congregational approach to exegesis is especially interesting, for by it the Anabaptists avoided both "autonomous individualism," on the one hand, and the papal or magisterial "tyranny" that threatened the common priesthood of believers, on the other hand (416).

Sincere interest and scholarly responsibility contribute to the success of Murray's

investigation. First, he shows a deep appreciation for Anabaptist hermeneutics and for its value to modern exegetes. At the same time, however, he willingly notes the flaws of the Anabaptist approach. Second, while he generalizes about the nature of Anabaptist hermeneutics, Murray never forgets that “Anabaptism was a diverse, complex, and fluid but coherent movement” (404).

The reader will also benefit greatly from the essays on John Calvin and Martin Luther. Barbara Pitkin’s essay on the hermeneutics of John Calvin will be especially helpful to the novice in this field of study, since she summarizes past and present trends in the research of Calvin’s hermeneutic (341–71). Examining Luther’s hermeneutic, Mark D. Thompson finds both consistency and change: “From his earliest lectures right through his death [Luther] insisted on the authority of Scripture, its God-given clarity when dealt with honestly and with faith, and its fundamental unity in its focus on Christ crucified” (306). He argues, *contra* Karl Barth and other scholars, that Luther conceived of Scripture as the Word of God, not as a vessel that merely contains God’s Word (300).

Thompson also tracks the change in Luther’s approach to Scripture. He insightfully summarizes the manner in which Luther cast aside the allegorizing, four-fold exegesis of Scripture and replaced it with his familiar Law-Gospel dichotomy. Thompson also provides helpful information on Luther’s emphasis upon the devotional character of biblical exegesis and upon the preaching of Scripture (306–314).

With insightful essays on the various traditions of biblical interpretation in the medieval and Reformation eras, this volume of *A History of Biblical Interpretation* is a helpful tool for any Bible student or church historian. Readers can only hope for the same in the anticipated third volume on the modern period.

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***John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor.* By W. Robert Godfrey. Wheaton: Crossway, 2009. 207 pages. Paperback, \$15.99.**

The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Calvin’s birth brought a wave of new works and editions in celebration of the influential thinker. Robert Godfrey’s *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* is part of that renewed interest, offering an accessible introduction to the life and thought of the patriarch of the reformed tradition, of which Godfrey’s Presbyterian denomination is part. Aware of the many negative stereotypes with which Calvin is nowadays associated, Godfrey hopes to present Calvin as both a pilgrim journeying through the struggles of his own faith and a pastor leading others in the paths of their faith by the light of biblical doctrine and practice.

What particularly sets this biography apart is that it attempts to describe Calvin as the man he was in his time and who he viewed himself to be. The historical Calvin can easily be lost when so often viewed as a paragon and progenitor of theological creativity but Godfrey narrated the life of Calvin as being first concerned with the pastoral responsibilities of his day. Godfrey’s Calvin is not a reclusive academic solely focused on leaving the heritage for which he is known. Godfrey’s Calvin is a pastor whose heart was set to tend to those under his care.

Godfrey was careful to note several of the instances when Calvin put current needs before the work that would define his legacy. He had set aside writing in order to care for his ailing wife (8–9). He would have tended to those struck by the plague

had not the council prohibited him in order to preserve his own often frail health (62). Godfrey's primary emphases were to display Calvin as a reformer of worship and the sacraments, an organizer of an educational program, and as counselor, not just the theologian of predestination and the *Institutes*.

Continued care is given to placing Calvin within his own context. While appeal is often made to Calvin in matters such as soteriology and free will, Godfrey preferred to handle such issues with the same importance that Calvin had assigned to them. After introducing Calvin biographically up to the point of the beginning of the Genevan ministry Godfrey presented surveys of several prominent theological topics. He began, not with predestination or election, but with worship, for Calvin himself, in listing the two most important doctrines of the faith, placed worship before salvation (77). Even with a key element of Calvin's theology such as providence, Godfrey wrote that Calvin's motivation was not the formulation of scholastic ennui but rather to present the doctrine as a comfort to the saints (ch. 10).

This biography is suitably written for the church. It grants access to a solid understanding of Calvin and his time while maintaining a readability that engages readers who might be reading it to satisfy their curiosity about the name they might so often hear. Unfamiliar terminology and historical references are generally either avoided or, more often, adequately explained. Godfrey's presentation will not lose anyone in excursions on the aggregated literature that has built up around Calvin and his theology. There is instead within this volume an insistence to let Calvin speak for himself. Explanation of Calvin's theology does not come from Godfrey's analysis but rather from an appropriately extensive use of quotations directly from Calvin's pen. Hopefully, this reliance on the primary sources will serve as an impetus for readers to read more of Calvin's works directly.

The hazard in this method must be recognized alongside this advantage. The natural consequence of leaving aside debate on issues, although it provides for a clean reading, is that such a presentation is inherently one-sided. One manifestation of this idealism is when Godfrey wrote that Calvin taught double predestination "because Paul taught it" (122). Not all would agree with Calvin or Godfrey that that was Paul's teaching. While Godfrey did not have any particularly egregious views against which readers must be guarded, it is helpful to be aware of this. This is the case if this book were to be used in a church setting, which would be an excellent use of the book. The leader of a study group would be obliged to be aware of more than what the scope of this biography covers.

Godfrey has given the church a fresh biography of a reformer whose identity is often lost in his theological heritage. He gives a clear reminder of who Calvin was in his own time—a pastor, educator, expositor, and a man whose life was committed to the city he served. In his service to the church and in his own spiritual pilgrimage Calvin left a legacy that Godfrey has shown must not be forgotten 500 years later.

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*A Catholic Reformed Theologian: Federalism and Baptism in the Thought of Benjamin Keach, 1640–1704.* By D.B. Riker *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* 35. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009. 257 pages. Softcover, \$32.00.

In another valuable installation in the recent renaissance of Benjamin Keach studies, D.B. Riker has attempted to locate Keach as a theologian, not just a pastor. This book is the culmination of Riker's Ph.D. studies at the University of Aberdeen, and he now serves as the president of the Equatorial Baptist Theological Seminary in his native Brazil. In summary, Riker denies James Berry Vaughn's assertion that Keach was merely a practical theologian. He argues that Keach was neither sectarian nor Calvinist, but rather a catholic Reformed theologian in the Reformed Orthodox tradition. To do so, he presents a very helpful biography, then a thorough study of Keach's theology of covenant and baptism, concluding that "Keach is a theologian, working as a Reformer, to restore the church to what he perceives to be the biblical pattern" (127).

To make his argument, Riker begins by painting the Reformation as a continuation of that element of the medieval church that did not emphasize the oral tradition. The Reformed Orthodox tradition (which included the Puritans) highlighted its continuity with Scripture and the catholic tradition embodied in the ecumenical creeds and systems. Riker identifies the central beliefs of Reformed Orthodoxy as the five points of Calvinism, the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ, and paedobaptism. It primarily disputed with Socinians, Papists, Anabaptists, and Arminians. An important emphasis of this tradition is the covenant, monopoleuric in its commencement but dipoleuric in its continuance. Riker specifically locates Keach in the high (middle) stage of Protestant Orthodoxy as a movement. He clarifies that "Orthodox" refers to the content of teaching and "catholic" refers to its Christian adherers.

Riker presents a full exposition of Keach's own federal theology and baptismal theology with an eye toward several claims. First, Keach spoke positively about the ecumenical creeds, and the Reformed Federalist John Owen was his "most cherished" author (52). Second, Keach rejected both Baxterianism as Arminianism and Antinomianism. Third, Keach moved away from the Reformed tendency of conflating the covenant of grace with the covenant of redemption. Fourth, Keach made believers' baptism a central element of his own federalism. Riker draws some very important conclusions from these claims: Keach was neither a Biblicist nor successionist, making him catholic; Keach held to a middle way of Orthodox thinking; Keach's rejection of paedobaptism did not exclude him from mainstream Reformed thought. These are very interesting conclusions sure to generate discussion among students of Baptist thought.

On the positive side, Riker is absolutely correct that Keach cannot be labeled a Biblicist, a practical theologian, a sectarian, or a Calvinist. Keach's thought and intentions were much more diverse than historians have sometimes given him credit. However, Riker may have oversold his case that Keach should be primarily classified a "catholic Reformed theologian." It seems that Riker wants to make Keach an intentional part of a broad tradition (as in more than Particular Baptist; Timothy George even uses the word "ecumenical" in his foreword), but his own arguments do not support this conclusion. In the first place, he does not fully appreciate the importance of Keach's belief in believers' baptism by immersion. This is not merely a blip in Keach's Reformed Orthodoxy, but the foundation of a wholly unique way of thinking in which Biblicism *does* trump a system. For Keach, paedobaptism

completely undermined the congregational nature of the church, something Riker notes without fully exploring. Riker even relates Keach's quote, "I am for Catholick communion and charity with all Saints, tho not for church communion with any unbaptized, as I believe you all are that have only had infants rantism" (126). There is nothing "catholic" (or ecumenical) about this statement in the sense that Riker tries to use it. Keach would not hold communion with most of the Reformed tradition—how could he then be catholic Reformed? He even maintained a separation from other Particular Baptist churches which rejected his views of congregational hymn singing and the laying on of hands.

Most importantly, Riker tries to confine Keach to the magisterial Reformation. He looks at Keach's positive estimation of the work of the great Reformers (particularly Luther and Calvin) as proof that Keach sees himself in that same sense, concluding that "he only departed from the earlier established Reformed Orthodox thought where necessary to continue the work of the Reformation" (127). He later argues, "Keach understands catholicity not as maintaining ties to particular institutions, but rather conscientious adherence to what he perceives to be catholic truth" (220). These statements simply cannot be held to mean what Riker says they mean. Keach was not "catholic" in the sense that Riker uses the term. Keach did not see himself in the same boat as other Protestants; his ministry is filled with disputes against almost every Christian tradition. He was not continuing the Reformation, he was correcting it; he was making it more biblical, not maintaining its system.

Those concerns aside, there is no doubt that Riker's book is a valuable contribution to any student of Benjamin Keach or early English Baptists. Filled with excellent footnotes and a practical index, this book is well designed and easy to follow. Riker has left plenty of work, however. He does not explore what it means that Keach was inconsistent and indiscriminate in his use of sources. He also does not mine the majority of Keach's sermons, his hymns, or his study of tropes and figures. Those elements will play a large role in future Keach studies.

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***A Messenger of Grace: A Study of the Life and Thought of Abraham Booth.* By Raymond Arthur Coppenger. Ontario: Joshua, 2009. 180 pages. Paperback, \$19.99.**

Due to the prominence of Baptists like Andrew Fuller and William Carey, the legacy of Particular Baptist Abraham Booth (1734–1806) has gone practically unnoticed. However, Raymond Coppenger's work on Booth rightly draws attention to a man who changed Baptist life, whether it be on issues of slavery, Calvinism, the Lord's Supper, or denominational affairs. As Coppenger demonstrates, no Baptists can be compared to Booth when it comes to the influence he had in contributing to the spiritual awakening of England.

As the title of Coppenger's work reveals, Booth's life fell within the context of the debates between the General and Particular Baptists. Booth began as a General Baptist and his early Arminian convictions came to fruition in his first publication, *On Absolute Predestination*, where he defended the doctrine of universal redemption. Nevertheless, Booth would later come to call his work theologically despicable and detestable, "an impotent attack on the honour of divine grace" and a "bold opposition to the sovereignty of God" (26). Booth's change of doctrinal conviction from

Arminianism to Calvinism manifested itself most famously in his work *The Reign of Grace* (1768). As a Calvinist Booth accepted a call to pastor Little Prescott Street Baptist Church, which was the oldest and strongest Particular Baptist church in the world during Booth's lifetime. As a pastor, Booth not only dedicated himself to the affairs of his church and denomination—as exemplified in his opposition to open communion advocates Robert Hall, Daniel Turner, and John Ryland,—but Booth also concerned himself with social problems, most importantly the abolition of slavery. Though the eradication of the slave trade was slow, Booth and his congregation took tremendous strides to abolish the slave trade by making generous donations towards the expenses needed to petition Parliament. Not only was Booth on the forefront of the abolition of the slave trade, but he was a major supporter of Baptist mission endeavors, particularly that of Andrew Fuller and William Carey. As Coppenger observes, it was Booth who first supported the Baptist Missionary Society in London. Perhaps one of Booth's most unexpected influences on Baptist foreign missions came when Adoniram Judson read Booth's *Paedobaptism Examined* on his way to the mission field and became America's first Baptist foreign missionary. In the end, Booth's impact on foreign missions is immeasurable and is yet another example of the harmony that exists between Calvinism and evangelistic zeal for the lost.

One of the strengths of Coppenger's work is the emphasis he puts on Booth's passionate affirmation of the "doctrines of grace." In *The Reign of Grace*, Booth seeks to demonstrate from the Scriptures the sovereignty of God in salvation. Yet, Booth did not fall prey to the errors of hyper-Calvinism and the Antinomianism that so often accompanied it. Nevertheless, Booth was a moderate Calvinist, for as Coppenger explains, Booth and Fuller disagreed on the precise application of grace. "Booth went so far as to say that if regeneration precedes believing, men would be in a safe state without coming to Christ" (82). Fuller, however, believed Booth to have confused the warrant to come to Christ with the act of actually coming. "Fuller held that a sinner may have a warrant to come to Christ, but if he is unwilling to exercise it, he cannot receive eternal life in his state of unwillingness" (83). Such fine distinctions became manifested on the issue of the extent of the atonement as well. Nonetheless, though Booth and Fuller disagreed, they remained in general agreement on the basic tenets of Calvinism that held the Particular Baptists together.

If there is one weakness to Coppenger's work, it is the haziness in which he defines hyper-Calvinism. Coppenger observes that Booth was supralapsarian (the decree of election is logically prior to the decree to permit the fall) and Coppenger concludes from this that Booth gave way to hyper-Calvinism (91). However, historically and theologically, supralapsarianism is not synonymous with hyper-Calvinism, nor does the latter necessarily follow from the former. Hyper-Calvinism has typically been characterized by those who accept fatalism and consequently see no reason to evangelize for God will save whom he will save anyway. However, historically Calvinists of the supralapsarian type have rejected fatalism and wholeheartedly affirmed evangelism and missions as God's foreordained means to his predestined ends. Coppenger errs in defining hyper-Calvinism as über-Calvinism instead of a pseudo-Calvinism which draws the inference from God's sovereignty that there is no need for missions. Therefore, to equate the two is neither historically nor theologically accurate.

Coppenger has provided contemporary Baptists with an outstanding treatment of the life and theology of Abraham Booth. Booth's theology was not only staunchly orthodox but characterized by Calvinism's emphasis on the sovereignty of



grace. Thanks to Booth the “grace of God, the doctrine proclaimed so ably by Abraham Booth, is reigning again in modern theological thought” (133).

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***The Challenge of Being Baptist: Owning a Scandalous Past and an Uncertain Future.* By Bill J. Leonard. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. 162 pages. Paperback, \$24.95.**

***Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers: Exploring Christian Faith.* By Bill J. Leonard. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 112 pages. Paperback, \$13.00.**

Respected moderate historian and dean of the Divinity School at Wake Forest University Bill Leonard has never been shy to print his perspective on Baptist self-identity, particularly with respect to the Southern Baptist Convention. Having written *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*, *Baptist Ways: A History*, and *Baptists in America* (as well as co-edited the new and interesting *The Acts of the Apostles: Four Centuries of Baptist Interpretation* with Beth Barr, Mikeal Parsons, and Doug Weaver), Leonard is a popular speaker on issues related to Baptist identity. Indeed, his lectures sponsored by Baylor University, the Associated Baptist Press, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship were the genesis for *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, which in turn helped give shape to *Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers*. These two books overlap in so many ways that they should be treated in the same review.

*The Challenge of Being Baptist*, while suffering from a few critical flaws, is a very interesting read in that it offers Leonard's answer to the question, “Why would anyone want to be a Baptist?” After finishing the book, the reader may not know, but he or she will know Leonard's agenda for future generations of Baptists—his re-vision of Baptist identity. Leonard's pessimism is understandable but disappointing in that it obscures some valuable insights. He identifies five central concepts that Baptists cannot ignore: Baptist self-consciousness, trends in Baptist polity, Baptist hermeneutics, a theology of conversion, and cooperation. Squished between his overgeneralizations and underdemonstrations are valid concerns that readers should not miss.

Leonard bases this book on his observation that many Baptist churches today “are historically Baptist, but few of their younger members know why or really care” (12). He goes on to say that the basic Baptist principles of Biblicism, conversionism, baptism by immersion, and congregationalism may be uniquely situated to answering the challenges of twenty-first century religion and culture. But he worries that Baptists are losing these principles without knowing it. First, he argues that many Baptists' self-consciousness is based on either their regional identity, their denominational structure, their separatist/independent attitude, or their revivalist culture. Unfortunately, none of these are uniquely Baptist. He encourages individual churches to explore their Baptist heritage for themselves. Second, he worries about structural trends among Baptists that he cannot reconcile with Baptist trends, particularly megachurches and Baptist “bishops.” To Leonard, basic Baptist polity consists of radical congregationalism and associational cooperationalism, and he insists that the societal model better reflects this than the denominational model (more on this

to follow). Third, he accuses Baptists of forgetting their hermeneutic, based largely on the observation that Baptists hold to contradictory systems of Calvinism and Arminianism which has led to subsequent contradictions, the most reprehensible of which being the concurrent hermeneutics of slavery and liberation. He summarizes his argument with the memorable line, "From a historical perspective, Baptists are Biblicists except when they are not. Then they often split" (72). Fourth, Leonard accuses Baptists of being silent about a clear theology of conversion, baptism, and re-baptism. Modern conversionist individualism combined with propositional evangelism has disintegrated Baptist community and confused countless church members about the meaning and purpose of their baptism. Because believers' baptism by immersion is so important to the idea of a believers' church, and consequently Baptist identity, churches cripple themselves by ignoring issues of alien immersion and child baptism. Finally, he encourages churches to return to a societal model, which means that they choose how and with whom to cooperate on any and all ministries. He hopes this will lead to more interdenominationalism and ecumenism, as well as social involvement.

Leonard's keen, if cynical, eye has certainly identified massive concerns for Baptists. If Baptist churches are basing their identity on anything other than Baptist principles, their identity will be generationally conditioned. Furthermore, it is very difficult to see how Baptists can have bishops. Most importantly, the lack of a unifying hermeneutic or theology of conversion is a tremendous obstacle to cooperation and growth. Leonard even blames current polity on exacerbating the problem, including the lack of effective moderators, clergy/laity power blocs, divisions and polarization, and a growing emphasis on individualism. So why would anyone want to be a Baptist? Leonard himself may not even be sure.

Though Leonard does make these strong points in *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, the reader comes away from this book wondering why he chose to publish it. To use the phrase "fish or cut bait," Leonard seems to be quite clearly cutting bait with most Baptists in America, especially those in the South. It very well could be that his accusations are justified, but his associated condescending tone is a barrier to his potential audience. Furthermore, he assumes that his reader has a reasonable familiarity with Baptist history and Reformation history (considering that he believes most young Baptists are ignorant of these very things, to whom exactly is he writing?). But his lack of citations and documentation for many of his generalizations will turn away a more scholarly readership, as well. His historical surveys are useful and engaging, but too brief and limited for scholarly use and too laden with jargon for introductory use. He tries to remain historically neutral, but his biases trickle into his interpretations. Ultimately, *The Challenge of Being Baptist* suffers from over-generalizing, under-demonstrating, and not having an audience.

Those three concerns are not a problem for *Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers*, a format designed for generalizations and with a built-in readership. In it, he follows volumes written by Donald McKim (*Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*; incidentally, McKim has recently released a second volume) and F. Belton Joyner, Jr. (*United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*). In some places, he even follows their order of questions. In a simple question-and-answer format that is too vague to be confessional but too broad to be catechetical, he describes who Baptists are, what they believe about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, man, salvation, the church, the Bible, and theology. His primary resources are confessions of faith printed in Lumpkin's famous compilation and hymns sung in Baptist churches. In

the process, he shares the gospel with his readers, stands on the soapboxes clarified in *The Challenge of Being Baptist*, and takes great concern with his readers' salvation.

*Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers* is a very suitable format for Leonard's tone and purposes because he can only gloss over the various Baptist views. This is something Leonard does well, fairly, and consistently, highlighting shared views on congregationalism, believers' baptism, the authority of Christ, conversionism, and religious liberty. Unfortunately, where Baptists do not agree, Leonard must speak vaguely (as with respect to biblical authority) or universally (as with respect to Baptist views on Calvinism and Arminianism), and the format is too short to allow sufficient explanation.

Indeed, this format leads to a number of significant limitations. Most importantly, it attracts an introductory readership. These readers are not interested in footnotes or documentation, and Leonard does not burden them therewith. Unfortunately, this means that the readers are taking Leonard's word that he is accurately portraying Baptist beliefs. For example, he says, "Debates over the virgin birth continue among certain Baptists, although with perhaps less intensity than in the twentieth century" (22). That seems reasonable, but Leonard offers no data in support. Furthermore, introductory readers are not terribly interested in historic Baptist confessions, which are the only documents Leonard cites (which makes sense considering his profession). They are interested in who Baptists *are*, not who they *were*; considering Leonard's frequent lament that Baptists are historically ignorant, his approach is quite curious. The much more valuable—and significantly more time-consuming—approach would be to survey current confessions of faith with the same purpose. The same is true of his use of hymns, which may or may not be known by many Baptists today, but the reader would certainly not know because Leonard does not identify any of these hymns or define their usage.

Leonard also steps away from his introductory purposes in subtle ways. Every once in a while, he speaks prescriptively instead of descriptively, using words such as "should" and "would do well." He also can speak rather strongly for an introductory audience, saying for example that re-baptism is "surely" taking the Lord's name in vain (69). There are also some places where he chooses odd wording, saying for example, "Some Baptist groups and individuals, no doubt a majority, oppose any homosexual behavior" (91), instead of "A majority of Baptists oppose any homosexual behavior." These subtle elements tend to muddy an otherwise straightforward project.

In summary, Leonard has fired two more literary shots across the bow of Baptists in these two books. Readers should be very concerned with his generalizations and lack of documentary support (or even a helpful list of further resources), but they should not question his Baptist heart. Leonard believes in multiple Baptist traditions—"many ways to be a Baptist" (*The Challenge of Being Baptist*, 38), and the reader does not have to agree with his "way" to appreciate his concern for a Baptist believers' church. However, the introductory readership for which Leonard seems to writing may not know this.

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***Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian.* Edited by Gerald R. McDermott. New York: Oxford, 2009. 228 + xvii pages. Hardcover, \$99.00.**

The task of introducing the thought of any theologian within a few short pages of a book is a daunting one, compounded exponentially when the subject is Jonathan Edwards. Long heralded as “America’s theologian”, or “America’s Augustine”, Edwards has been a person of much interest and influence since his pastoral days at Northampton during the Great Awakening. The presses continue to burgeon with articles, dissertations, and books at an accelerated rate and Edwards can now even be found in the noted *Cambridge Companion* series. So why the need for another introduction to Edwards?

Gerald McDermott, professor of religion at Roanoke College, Virginia, observes that *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* fills a niche between two general types of books on Edwards: books written by non-scholars to a general audience—helpful, but commonly ignorant of current scholarship and often plagued with inaccuracies and misrepresentations, and books written by scholars which are often only understood by scholars. *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* is the first book produced by Edwards scholars directed to the non-specialist. McDermott is adept at writing on Edwardsean themes in an accessible manner. He is the author of numerous articles and books on Edwards, notably *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths*, and most recently *Seeing God: Jonathan Edwards and Spiritual Discernment*.

*Understanding Jonathan Edwards* issued from the papers presented at the May 2007 conference entitled “Jonathan Edwards in Europe” held at Károli Gáspár University, Budapest, Hungary. The volume offers a unique international perspective on Edwards. As expected, familiar Edwardsean scholars such as Harry Stout, Douglas Sweeney, Sang Hyun Lee and others are present along with European scholars including Tibor Fabiny and Miklos Vetö.

The volume begins with a helpful timeline of Edwards’s life followed by sixteen chapters which treat various aspects of Edwards’s life and thought, ending with six pages of further reading and an adequate four page index. McDermott contributes an introduction and conclusion as well as two chapters. Chapters are arranged in a point-counterpoint fashion. Chapters 1 and 2 treat the life and career of Edwards. Ken Minkema, Executive Editor and director of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* and Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, offers an essay in Chapter 1 which focuses on Edwards’s societal context and Edwards as a person.

Chris Chun, Associate Professor of Church History at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, and editor of a volume in the critical edition of *The Works of Andrew Fuller* (forthcoming), responds to Minkema in Chapter 2. Chun notes that Minkema’s assessment of Edwards as “one of the great fountainheads” of the modern mission movement is incomplete if Edwards’s *The Life of David Brainerd* is considered as his sole contribution. Chun supplements Minkema’s assessment with two additional treatises through which Edwards exerted great missiological impact upon Particular Baptists: *Freedom of the Will* and *Humble Attempt*. Chun notes the appropriation that Andrew Fuller makes in his *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* of Edwards distinction between natural and moral inability. Fuller develops Edwards’s views to their “maximum potential” and applied them to “the formulation of a precise theology, which became the basis for what was to become known as the Modern

Missionary Movement.”

The following chapters address the topics of Edwards and revival, the Bible, biblical typology, beauty, his literary life, philosophy, and world religions. McDermott concludes with a discussion of Edwards’s continuing relevance for today. *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* compares favorably with recent overviews or introductions to Edwards’s life and thought. When placed along side *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* and *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards* the similarities are obvious, due in part to the fact that some of the same Edwardsean scholars contributed to each volume. Beyond authorship, all three volumes share significant overlap in themes and structure, yet the *Cambridge* and *Princeton* volumes differ from McDermott’s volume with their extensive footnotes and general density.

It is due to the points noted above, along with the helpful point-counterpoint format and international scope, that *Understanding Jonathan Edwards* shines. The non-specialist should find McDermott’s volume an unintimidating, illuminating, and enjoyable read. The contributors to this fine introduction have produced a beautifully-executed engagement with the thought of one of Christendom’s greatest luminaries.

Rob Boss

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### Studies in Ethics and Philosophy

***The Triumph of God over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering.* By William Hasker. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. 228 pages. Softcover, \$20.00.**

William Hasker’s *The Triumph of God over Evil* offers readers a unique, highly accessible, lucid attempt at providing Christians a justification of evil in the world. Instead of trying to offer a theodicy for skeptics, Hasker wishes to provide a theodicy for those who already embrace the main tenets of Christian orthodoxy. But, as an open theist, Hasker’s spin on theodicy is driven in part by his willingness to jettison one key concept traditionally held by Christians—that God possesses exhaustive knowledge of the future.

Hasker demonstrates a keen awareness of the contemporary literature concerning the problem of evil, both in its logical forms, as well as evidential forms (which he discusses in chapter seven). Hasker begins by clarifying his intention, which is to provide a theodicy rather than a defense against the problem of evil. As such, he seeks to move beyond skeptical theistic defenses and free will defenses with his project. Hasker carefully distinguishes philosophical problems of evil from existential (or pastoral) problems of evil. He notes that the crisis of faith that often ensues from serious tragedy causes the deep search for a justification of evil while simultaneously (although perhaps unintentionally) stifling the search for truth.

Regarding the Holocaust, Hasker relays the quote attributed to Irving Greenberg, who said, “No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children” (22). Evils such as the Holocaust lead Hasker to discuss various post-Holocaust theodicies. He explains that some people employ statements such as Greenberg’s in an effort to undermine genuine attempts to refute atheistic arguments motivated by the problem of evil. Greenberg’s statement suggests that anyone who would dare venture a philosophical

response to the problem of evil doesn't adequately feel the moral seriousness of the issues. "The speaker thereby claims for him- or herself a moral seriousness which is supposedly lacking in the opponent" (23). Hasker acknowledges the seriousness of evil, especially evils such as the Holocaust, but he insists (rightly) that attempting to provide a philosophical theodicy does not entail the conflation of the existential problem of evil with the logical/evidential problem of evil. That is, there is a place for weeping with those who weep (cf. C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*) and expounding the difficulties of Christian theology in the face of philosophical problems of evil (cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*) (22).

Describing John Roth's theology of protest (31–41), Hasker writes, "In many respects it [Roth's theodicy] is surprisingly traditional and orthodox" (35). But orthodoxy is not something that comes in degrees. Even if Arius walked the straight and narrow concerning other matters of doctrine, his heretical Christology was enough to earn him the label "heterodox". A theological system either is, or is not, orthodox. Roth's insistence that the Holocaust demands that "human repentance will have to be matched by God's" entails an outright denial of divine holiness. Surely this is enough to label such a position heterodox. In all fairness, Hasker ultimately rejects this position, but I find it surprising that he could find anything even remotely Christian about a theodicy which cites approvingly of David Blumenthal, a Jewish theologian of protest, who "crafts prayers in which, after repenting of their sins, the congregation asks God to repent of his sins." Continuing on to discuss the theodicy of D.Z. Phillips, Hasker agrees that justifications for evil relying on soul-making theodicies fail, for it won't do to have the Good Samaritan saying, "Thank you, God, for another opportunity to be responsible" when coming across a victim of robbers (48).

The book continues with stimulating discussions about the Plantinga-Mackie exchange and the success of Plantinga's freewill defense against the logical problem of evil (55–69). Hasker goes on to reject the so-called "best of all possible worlds" theodicy first promulgated by Leibniz. Hasker bases his rejection of this thesis on contemporary arguments, and his interaction with this literature again displays his profound awareness of a vast amount of contemporary philosophy of religion. Nonetheless, even if attempts to defend the coherence of such an idea prove successful, Hasker's open theism prevents him from accepting the best of all possible worlds theodicy, for invariably free creatures play a creative role in determining which world God has actualized, and (given open theism) God could not know those decisions in advance.

Chapter five introduces the meat of Hasker's free will theodicy. He disagrees with both Henry Morris and William Dembski, who argue that natural evil is the result of human sin (103–09). Instead, Hasker maintains that natural evils are the result of certain structural features of our world, and those structural features contribute to the goodness of our world in such a way that this "goodness" outweighs the negatives brought about by natural evils.

In chapter six, Hasker sets out his arguments concerning the value of free will (154–56). He suggests that the evils that result from our possession of free will do not outweigh the benefits of having genuine freedom. Hasker takes it as obvious that it would be better to parent an autonomous child (even if not perfectly predictable) rather than a robot-like, perfectly controllable child because of the genuine joy that it would bring the parent even amidst some suffering and pain. By parallel reasoning, Hasker concludes that it is better for God to create a world with free agents rather

than a world of robots.

But free will—which Hasker finds so valuable—isn't the solution to the problem of evil. In fact, by Hasker's admission, free will is the very cause of all the problems. If the analogy concerning parenthood holds, it must have been well within God's ability to create a world without free will—thus a world in which there was no Holocaust. As both Roth and Phillips suggest, if the Holocaust was the result of God's endowing us with the "gift" of significant freedom, then "bestowing free will on the creatures was simply too great a risk and should not have been done" (37). This is all the more true if God, despite his lack of knowledge of what *would* happen, possessed prior to creation at least the knowledge of what *could* happen (i.e., knowledge of all modalities, which is exactly the sort of knowledge Hasker and other open theists maintain God does have). Furthermore, Hasker's parenthood analogy shows the value of free will for the parent, not the child. But the problem of evil is a problem for us—we are the victims of evil, even if we are also the perpetrators. Besides this oversight, as a parent, given the eschatological consequences of sin, I would absolutely prefer to create my children without free will, for such would guarantee that my children would be saved from the *everlasting* terrors of hell. So, while free will seems to provide an adequate defense against the logical problem of evil, much more is needed before we can conclude that free will provides an adequate theodicy.

Of course, it isn't surprising that Hasker sees such value in free will, given that he is willing to deny divine foreknowledge in order to preserve it. When outlining the theology that informs his theodicy, he repeatedly qualifies open theism with the adjective "orthodox", suggesting that mere assertion is enough to guarantee the outcome. Of course, if one is inclined to see openness theology as orthodox, perhaps one will be more inclined to see other compromises with traditional doctrines as not-so-problematic. In conclusion, I felt that Hasker's open theism creates as many problems for a free will theodicy as it solves, but space precludes a more detailed accounting of the impact of open theism on theodicy, the doctrine of God, or Christian theology more generally. Nonetheless, in spite of those concerns, Hasker's book is an important work that deserves that attention of not only professional philosopher/theologian, but also pastors who are likely to face open theism with increasing regularity as it continues to grow in popularity.

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***What Does the Lord Require? A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics.* By Walter C. Kaiser Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Softcover, \$22.00.**

The book title indicates that it is a work written to address ethical subjects with the intention of being able to teach and preach on those contemporary moral concerns. Walter Kaiser is a conservative Old Testament scholar of renown, who is also well known for his poignant biblical insights, careful commentary, and good humor in his public speaking.

This volume is a companion piece to that of Kerby Anderson's *Christian Ethics in Plain Language* (Nelson, 2005), which is a work cited in almost every chapter. The difference in the two works is that Kaiser adds more biblical insight, utilizing an analysis of one specific passage to Nelson's broader based moral discourses. The typical presentation in each chapter by Kaiser is that of briefly presenting a moral

problem (which Nelson presents in more detail), giving an outline for teaching and/or preaching on the selected passage, and then developing the outline with a mix of biblical commentary and practical application. He also adds a brief bibliography and some discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

The subjects that are addressed include contemporary moral concerns such as media, entertainment, and pornography; cohabitation and fornication; abortion and stem cell research; genetic research and artificial reproduction; animal “rights” and factory farms; and care for the environment. Some of the concerns that have a more familiar biblical ring to them are those of the poor, oppressed, and orphans; gambling and greed; adultery; divorce; homosexuality; crime and capital punishment; suicide, infanticide, and euthanasia; alcoholism and drugs; civil disobedience; wealth, possessions, and economics; and war and peace.

The style of presentation is decidedly conservative and evangelical. Kaiser tends to give a description of the moral problem without particularly offering any detailed solutions. Following the presentation of the problem, he offers a biblical principle to guide the ethical thinking and moral problem solving of the reader. This approach does not always provide the specific guidance that evangelicals are seeking, because it leaves a gap between the biblical concepts and how to manage the moral quandaries being addressed. Thus, reading Kaiser with Nelson is a healthy approach to address biblically these moral concerns.

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### Studies in Evangelism and Missions

***Christian Encounters with Iran: Engaging Muslim Thinkers after the Revolution.* By Sasan Tavassoli. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011. 308 pages. Hardcover, \$96.00.**

Sasan Tavassoli, a former Shi’i Sufi born in Iran and current i2 Ministries professor and minister in the Presbyterian Church of Iran in America, writes *Christian Encounters with Iran: Engaging Muslim Thinkers after the Revolution*, a work focused on post-revolutionary Iranian Islamic intellectual thought as it relates to Christianity. Tavassoli desires to: 1) inform English readers about modern Shi’i thought as it relates to Christianity; 2) assess the achievements of Iranian Muslim dialog with Christians; and 3) demonstrate that Shi’i Muslims in Iran are open to engagement with Christians (9). His thesis is that since the Islamic revolution of 1979, changes are occurring among Iranian Muslim intellectuals regarding Christianity that allow for more open and honest discussion.

Tavassoli divides *Christian Encounters* into six parts. Chapters one and six are the introduction and conclusion, respectively. Chapter two provides an overview of Iranian attitude toward Christianity. It addresses the history of Christianity in Iran and notes some of the Muslim dynasties that helped Iran connect with Christianity (Safavid with Shah Abbas and the Armenian Christians, for example). The chapter also attends to some of the theological, cultural, historical, and political influences that aid in shaping Iranians’ understanding of Christianity. Chapter three discusses Iranian Islamic publications that concern Christianity. These distributions fall into one of three general categories: traditional/polemic, objective/descriptive, and comparative/dialogical. Chapter four summarizes inter-faith discourse between Iranian



Muslims and Christians worldwide. Much of this chapter centers around four academic organizations that have fostered dialog with Christianity; three in Tehran, one in Qom; two governmental, two non-governmental. Chapter five focuses on three Iranian Shi'i intellectuals that have taken an active role in Muslim-Christian involvement. All three are at the cutting edge of progressive Islamic thought.

While there is some discussion of the negative characteristics of Iranian society and Iranian Muslim intolerance toward Christianity, the majority of the work centers on the advances made in Iranian Muslim-Christian dialog since 1979. Tavassoli's intent to focus on the positive aspects of Iranian Muslim discussions with Christians (particularly during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami) marks the overall tone of *Christian Encounters*. Tavassoli explains that some Iranian thinkers' interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith promotes communication with Christians (19, 106). He notes some intellectuals believe that Islam and Christianity can unite against common ills, such as secularism and globalization (108). He mentions similarities in doctrinal themes between Shi'i Muslims and Christians, Roman Catholics in particular (21). Tavassoli also shows that bridges are being made into Western culture and philosophy (22). He quotes part of Khatami's interview with CNN in 1998 when he shared his view on America's foundation and religion: "In my [Khatami's] opinion, one of the biggest tragedies in human history is this confrontation between religion and liberty which is to the detriment of religion, liberty, and the human beings who deserve to have both. The Puritans desired a system which combined the worship of God and human dignity and freedom. . . . Therefore, the Anglo-American approach to religion relies on the principle that religion and liberty are consistent and compatible. I believe that if humanity is looking for happiness, it should combine religious spirituality with the virtues of liberty" (38).

Tavassoli's irenic tone toward Iranian Muslim intellectuals portrays them as thinkers who desire to gain a better understanding of Christianity. Many Muslim Iranian intellectuals desire to teach Christianity accurately, and not just from an Islamic perspective. This includes Christian doctrines that are controversial for Islam such as the resurrection of Christ, divine sonship, and the Trinity (71, 112). Of these doctrines, interestingly, the belief that one Iranian scholar sees as the most divisive and irreconcilable is the doctrine of original sin (82). Within this largely liberal tradition of Iranian Muslim thought, there is an aura of acceptance of divergent beliefs. A thought pattern appears to be developing where Christianity could be seen as a way to salvation—Tavassoli notes this is seen through a traditional understanding of Islam that states all prophets have brought the same message (127). While this is helpful in some regards, Tavassoli indicates correctly that a promotion of pluralism lessens the need to focus on Christian distinctives (128) and thus could diminish the very dialog Iranian Muslim intellectuals intend to promote.

Being Iranian himself, Tavassoli understands acutely the importance of a non-confrontational style to his people's psyche. Treating those whom he encounters with respect and equality seems to have provided the work with its greatest strength: through his research and interaction with Iranian Muslim intellectuals, he has helped make available to Westerners data on institutions, publications, and people associated with Muslim-Christian discourse in Iran. The organizations Tavassoli mentions—The Organization of Culture and Islamic Relations (OCIR), The International Center for Dialogue Among Civilizations (ICDAC), The Institute for Interreligious Dialogue (IID), and The Center for Religious Studies (CRS)—all promote, to varying degrees, discussion with Christians. While there are inherent

weaknesses in some of their strategies (126–28), these government-sanctioned institutions that arose after the revolution (after 1990) show the interest Iranians have in religious discussion. The publications he references are valuable, too. The volume of material written by Iranians on Christianity and the Western works being translated to Farsi by Iranians reveal an openness toward dialog with Christianity not seen in many Muslim countries. Again, as Tavassoli notes, there are concerns in what is being written and translated (85), but works from Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, Augustine, Aquinas, and evangelical scholar-theologian Alistair McGrath are being translated. Tavassoli's discussion of Abdol Karim Soroush, Mostafa Malekian, and Mojtabeh Shabestari, is noteworthy. They are Iranian Shi'i thinkers trained in Qom and have an acute knowledge of Islam, while at the same time understand Christianity. Each is influential, each has taught courses in theology, and each has published extensively. Each of them is fluent in English (130) and willing to converse with Christians. Tavassoli's discussion of these people and themes corrects a misunderstanding of Iran: Iran is not an exclusively monolithic, fundamentalist religious state. Many opinions exist within the framework of the Islamic Republic.

There is much to like about this work, but two matters are problematic. The title, *Christian Encounters with Iran*, is a bit of a misnomer. The piece is not necessarily about Christian encounters with Iran. There is no mention of Christian missionary endeavors toward Iran or the current exponential growth of the Iranian Christian church inside Iran. Little attention is given to the current indigenous Iranian Christian communities (Assyrian and Armenian) or persecution of Iranian Christians. While these concepts are not the focus of the book (and thus it is understandable that they are not referenced), the title should perhaps read: *Iranian Encounters with Christianity*, a more accurate depiction of Tavassoli's theme of Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran. More noteworthy, Tavassoli does not define the term "Christian" or explain the type of Christians he is referencing. *Christian Encounters* is a piece dealing with Iranian Muslim thinkers' interaction with a certain type of Christianity—orthodox (biblical) Christianity—one that is not inherited or passed on from one generation to another. Contrary to Islam, one must convert to Christianity; no one is born a Christian. Perhaps the reason a definition is not mentioned is that the author assumes others know this distinctive, or that a too narrow or a too broad definition could detract from his desire to show the overall breadth and depth of Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran. Nonetheless, some type of explanation and clarification would have been helpful.

Iranians, even at the highest level of government, are interested in engaging Christianity. Since Iran is fast becoming an international power, and it has a history of religious tolerance dating to the days of Cyrus the Great, much can be learned about Muslim Iranian thinkers' understanding of Christianity. Part of a series published by I.B. Tauris that delves into the history and culture of Iran, *Christian Encounters* is a fascinating look into the complex scheme of Muslim-Christian dialog with Iranians since the revolution. Tavassoli provides the reader with a wealth of information, and much can be researched further. Originally a Ph.D. dissertation, this piece provides careful documentation of its sources. Written well and temperate throughout, those interested in Iran, particularly Muslim-Christian dialog in Iran, would do well to read this work.

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***The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in an Emerging Culture.* By Mark Liederbach and Alvin L. Reid. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009. 302 pages. Softcover, \$19.99.**

Much has been written in recent days about the Emerging Church Movement (ECM) in all its various forms. While the leaders of this movement continue to publish works defending their positions, critics have feverishly critiqued, evaluated, and dismissed their volumes for a number of theological and methodological reasons. In this volume, Mark Liederbach and Alvin Reid, both of whom are professors at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, attempt to fashion a *via media* between the proponents and the critics. They write, "It is our conviction . . . that while many of the ECM's criticisms and critiques have validity, there is a better way forward that will take us beyond the overreaction to the real and perceived failures of the modern Conventional Church. This way forward involves listening to the critiques and ideas of the ECM while being careful not to reject the necessary foundations or truths of the gospel message" (21–22). The authors hope that this convergence of two streams of thought—the emerging church and the conventional church—will bring about a more effective and biblically sound "convergent church."

The book is divided into three main sections which, on some level, could almost be read independently of each other as long as one has read the introduction. In the first section comprising four chapters, the authors take their readers on a journey through the development of modernity into its transition to postmodernity. The book provides a basic overview of the thought and influence of Descartes, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Derrida. While the overall nature of this historical review is fairly basic, it certainly provides any reader without a background in philosophy the context from which to see how contemporary culture reached post-modernism. Then the authors demonstrate how different ideas along the way found their way into the church. Finally, this section concludes with an evaluation of the prevalent characteristics of the ECM, including vintage faith, missional emphasis, holistic orthopraxy, communal authenticity, contextual relevance, and postevangelical movement.

The second section of the book provides a discussion on missional worship. These three chapters consider three distinct ideas that serve as a foundation to answering the criticisms coming from the emerging church. The first is the concept of life as worship. In this chapter, the authors challenge their readers to view every thought and deed as worship. The end goal is that the lives of Christians would reflect the glory of God in every aspect. The next concept to challenge the readers is to view Christianity as a movement and, as a result, be moved to the mission of spreading the gospel message. The final idea is that doctrine serves as a foundation for both worship and mission. This is the authors' most direct attempt at redirecting the drifting tendencies of the contemporary church. They argue that not only has the emerging church sacrificed doctrine at points but that evangelicals as a group suffer from doctrinal illiteracy among many of their people.

The final section of the book considers the idea of living out missional worship. It is in this section that the authors attempt to place some practical application to the concepts they have discussed in the previous chapters. The first two chapters of this section are also the most helpful of the book. In them, the authors discuss the subject of ethics. They propose that the two common streams within Christian ethics—deontology and virtue—need not be mutually exclusive; rather, they propose

that the goal of Christian ethics should be a life of virtue informed by deontological commands and content, resulting in a deontological virtue ethic. In the second chapter on ethics, the authors challenge their readers to reconsider social justice issues apart from the Social Gospel movement. It is in this chapter that many within “conventional” churches will encounter the struggle between being the church that cares for its own and the church that cares for the poor, widows, and orphans. The final three chapters of the book discuss the concepts of evangelism and discipleship. In these chapters, the readers are asked to evaluate their traditional methodologies of evangelism and discipleship for the sake of developing the most effective means possible to make disciples and teach them everything Christ has commanded.

As with any book written by multiple authors, there are times when the various chapters of this book appear to be somewhat disjointed from each other and do not follow a consistent theme. Even with that in mind, there are certainly some significant contributions made by this book. For the average reader with no background in the history of Western thought or philosophy, the historical survey of modernism and postmodernism in the first section is invaluable for understanding why the church is in her current position. The chapter entitled, “Converging on Ethics, Part 2: Who’s Afraid of the Social Gospel?” is probably worth the price of the book. It challenges and convicts both the conventional and the emergent approach to ethics. Overall, this volume is a worthy read and would make a good addition to the library of anyone addressing the problems of the contemporary church.

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***Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China.* By Lian Xi. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 292 pages. Hardcover, \$45.00.**

Although we will never know the exact figures, modern China has experienced amazing growth in the number of Protestant Christians during the twentieth century. Lian Xi’s valuable book postulates that this growth came largely because the “alien faith preached and presided over by foreign missionaries” was transformed “into an indigenous religion of the masses.” (2) Xi unveils modern Chinese Christianity in his carefully researched and written book, providing a much-needed overview of the rise of the indigenous church in the Middle Kingdom.

Xi begins his investigation with a brief historical treatment of early Christianity in China, tracing the religion from its initial introduction, through the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, and culminating in the Boxer Uprising. Having introduced us to his opinion on the failure of mission-directed, western Christianity to provide significant results, the author quickly turns to the major, indigenous Christian sects that arose after the start of the twentieth century, examining the history, method, and extension of these Chinese adaptations of Christianity. Weaving together his own research with unpublished materials, Xi provides chapters on the True Jesus Church, Watchman Nee and the Little Flock, and the underground church under the Chinese Communist Party, to name just a few of his topics. Xi contends that one cannot understand modern indigenous Chinese Christianity without understanding the pentecostal, chiliastic roots of Chinese folk Christianity, which he deems the “defining feature of popular Christianity in . . . twentieth-century China” (47).

Lian Xi has gathered a large amount of disparate material into a single volume,

attempting to demonstrate why apocalypticism/millenarianism has flourished in the Chinese Christian church. The author's handling of the Chinese sources alone makes this volume of immense value to scholars in the field. Xi seems to have analyzed all the most relevant scholarship in the field of study, and his laudatory effort has provided scholars with tantalizing hints for further research. The addition of an exhaustive bibliography of relevant source material, coupled with a glossary providing *pinyin* and *hanzi*, make this a resource for every person interested in this field.

In many ways, *Redeemed by Fire* echoes the thesis expounded by Norman Cohn in his 1957 work, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. According to Cohn, "eschatology came to exercise a powerful and enduring fascination" for European culture, when "needy and discontented masses were captured by some millennial prophet." Following the basic theme of Cohn's research, Xi applies the British historian's interpretation to his own reading of Chinese religious history. Xi compares the "Great Harmony" teaching of Confucianism (83), the White Lotus tradition, and the Eight Trigrams (73–74; 237), to the developments experienced in western Europe during times of cultural stress. Cohn ended his famous work by observing that the western world had yet to see "what happens when a paranoiac mass movement captures political power." For Xi, Christianity may provide the Chinese answer to Cohn's question, even if Communism does not.

By relying heavily on Chinese sources, and particularly on post-Liberation governmental documents, Xi sometimes falls victim to assuming the veracity of the "party line." For example, he generally presents orthodox Christianity, for him a representative of the "foreign domination" of the Chinese church, as oppressive. Heterodox Christianity, found in varying degrees within the indigenous millenarian movements, he terms "indigenous," and praiseworthy. In fact, early in the book Xi informs us that by the simple addition of Christian terminology, heterodox millenarian movements became "Christian." By positing that all indigenous movements were positive developments in creating an autonomous Chinese Christian church, Xi obfuscates the very definition of "Christian." Thus, the repeated condemnation of developing millenarian sects by those within the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy, becomes simply the work of western minions of a "foreign religion" as the investigation unfolds. Often, terminologies found within these unsympathetic sources leads the author to use terms such as "fundamentalist" (110), "proselytizing" (rather than "evangelizing," 17), and "eschatology" (168), without providing adequate conventional definitions.

Laying aside the small criticisms voiced above, a reviewer would be remiss in not giving *Redeemed by Fire* its proper accolades. Lian Xi's work fills a tremendous void for scholars of missionary history and indigenous church growth in China, as well as those studying millenarian revolts around the world. This work will continue to occupy a central place in the ongoing discussion of the growth of Protestant Christianity in China for some time to come.

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### Studies in Preaching and Pastoral Ministries

***Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice.* By Bryan Chapell. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. 320 pages. Hardcover, \$24.99.**

The important subject of congregational worship has received a great deal of attention in recent years from many distinct perspectives; in *Christ-Centered Worship*, Bryan Chapell (*Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* [Baker Books, 1994]; president of Covenant Theological Seminary) offers a conservative Presbyterian viewpoint, arguing that every church that truly understands and rightly holds the gospel of Jesus Christ will naturally gravitate to the particular pattern of worship he describes, concluding that “if our worship structures are to tell [the gospel] story consistently, then there must be certain aspects of our worship that remain consistent” (85), namely the individual’s gospel experience.

In the first part of the book, Chapell seeks to prove that key historic liturgies and biblical passages describe an essentially uniform approach to worship. The historic liturgies he chooses are those of the Roman Catholic Church (pre-Trent), Martin Luther, John Calvin, Westminster, and founding Covenant President Robert Rayburn. The key side-thesis in this section is the proposed deficiency in Westminster’s focus on right thought above right experience and Rayburn’s desire to reincorporate revivalist elements of authentic worship therein. With respect to the biblical data, he focuses on gospel worship (Isa 6), Sinai worship (Deut 5), Temple worship (2 Chron 5–7), spiritual worship (Rom 11–15), and eschatological worship (Rev 4–21). From these examples, he determines a common progression of adoration, confession, assurance, thanksgiving, petition, instruction, communion, charge, and blessing (118), which just happens to be the same elements of the individual’s gospel experience (99). He argues that the gospel is a superior organizing principle to worship than other well-meaning concepts such as “Trinity, sacrifice, covenant loyalty, community, kingdom, synagogue, worship, ecclesial catholicity, early church continuity” (142). The second part of the book is a more detailed description of the components (or resources) of gospel worship consisting primarily of defenses and examples of his proposed elements.

There is much to commend *Christ-Centered Worship* to a general readership. Writing with the warm and comfortable tone of authors such as Robert Webber and Harold Best, it is easily accessible to almost anyone, and its basic premise is very meaningful. Christian churches should be intentional about the way they presume to approach God in worship, and it is very hard to find fault with a unifying principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Churches should be as intentional about their confession of sin, personal and corporate repentance, and thanksgiving for forgiveness as they are about adoration and preaching (if indeed they are “intentional” about those times in the first place). They should heed well Chapell’s sections on the recovery of carefully prepared Scripture readings as well as redemptive expository preaching.

The primary concerns with *Christ-Centered Worship* have to do with its basic argument and organization, which unfortunately muddies its overall conclusions. In short, Chapell starts with the historic liturgies and works backwards to the Bible. Unfortunately, his choice of historic liturgies includes a pre-Trent liturgy of his own creation, a largely unsuccessful Westminster liturgy, and a heretofore invisible Rayburn liturgy, and completely ignores a vast range of others. Also, his biblical analysis (which does not address 1 Corinthians 14 at all) is laced with frequent hedges such

as, “I do not mean to imply that Scripture intends” (103). Such selectivity strongly indicates an agenda. This is even more evident in the gap between his proposed “aspects” and “components” of Christian worship identified in the first part and the elements he actually defines in the second part.

In short, *Christ-Centered Worship* is a helpful resource for a church leader who wants a fresh look at the structure of congregational worship. But it is neither a thorough overview of historic worship practices, nor a careful study of the Bible, but only a presentation of one man’s opinions. It is a better alternative to no reflection on the practice of worship, to be sure, but not an ultimate reference.

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***The Early Preaching of Karl Barth: Fourteen Sermons with Commentary.* By William Willimon. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 171 pages. Paperback, \$25.00.**

In *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth*, William Willimon has compiled fourteen sermons preached by Barth during his pastorate at Safenwil followed by Willimon’s own critique of the homiletical practice of young Barth. This era was definitive in Barth’s life as he was in the process of making his break from the classical Liberalism under which he had been trained, resulting in the development of his own dialectical theology for which he would become known.

As wisdom is justified by her children, so is a theology justified by its sermons. In this compilation the reader will gain an insightful glance into the inner struggle of Barth as his sermons slowly betray his learned theology. The earliest sermons were the obvious productions of an intellectual liberal, focused on the problems of the day and how a better humanity would be able to overcome any challenge.

However, as Barth simultaneously wrote a commentary on Romans and wrestled with the frustration of the non-transforming message of Liberalism, he eventually became bound to expositional preaching. Barth’s struggle with his evolving theology becomes most evident in his sermon from Romans 12:1–2 delivered on March 3, 1918, only a few months before the publication of his Romans commentary. By the final sermon delivered in December of 1920, Barth had moved from anthropological to Christological centrism.

Though one gains much insight into Barth as a preacher, the focus of *The Early Preaching of Barth* is Willimon’s commentary that follows each sermon. Willimon is equally complimentary and condemnatory to Barth’s early preaching. He at times holds forth Barth as the model homiletician. Barth’s sermon from Matthew 9:14–15 is said to be “up-front and even exuberant in its apparent supposition that here are thoughts that no one has ever had—before listening to the sermon! Well done, you prophetic troubler of Israel!” (110). Contrarily, Willimon says of Barth, “He assumes too much for his listeners, is far too subtle in his exposition, and is too abstract in his treatment of a biblical text that bristles with corporeal vividness and stirring exhortation” (55).

Though Willimon offers beneficial contextual commentary surrounding each sermon, his attempt to use Barth’s homiletical mistakes as criticism for current well known preachers, including Rick Warren and Joel Osteen, require overreaching. The criticisms may be accurate, but they seem misplaced.

However, many developing pastors will find kinship with Barth as he fails to remain faithful to the text in an attempt to be relevant to the circumstances of culture. Any experienced pastor who blushes at the reminder of his own first sermons will be encouraged by young Barth's failed efforts, providing hope for improvement.

*The Early Preaching of Barth* should be read by those who proclaim the glorious mysteries of Christ if for no other reason than to see that a faulty theology leaves the pastor with no message and the people with no hope. Pragmatics must finally give way to conviction. The sermons that are birthed reveal the theology from whence they came. A discouraged pastor and a hopeless congregation are poor justifications for a weak theology. Barth's early preaching is an historical illustration of this truth; a lesson for all who preach.

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***The Lost Sermons of Scottish Baptist Peter Grant. Transcribed and Edited by Terry L. Wilder. Mountain Home, AR: BorderStone, 2010. 218 pages. Softcover. \$10.95.***

Though Peter Grant was once of the most influential preachers in early eighteenth century Scotland, many contemporary evangelicals are unaware of his preaching ministry. In Scotland, Grant's Gaelic (a predominant language in the Scottish Highlands) hymns still provide Scottish Baptists exposure to the evangelistic thought to this pastor/ itinerant preacher. However, the present volume affords readers on both sides of the Atlantic an encounter of the preaching of the Baptist pastor from the Scottish Highlands. In addition to the sermons, the volume includes a helpful, though brief, preface by Donald Meek, Retired Professor of Gaelic Studies that gives a glimpse of the stature of Peter Grant among his eighteenth-century Scottish hearers and an Afterword by Michael Haykin providing a timely reminder of the ongoing legacy of the evangelistic preacher. Terry Wilder adds his own helpful introduction to Grant's ministry in Grantown-on-Spey, which Wilder describes as strictly Baptist and as "warm-hearted, evangelical Calvinism" (viii). Wilder also notes that in Grant's sermons he "proclaimed salvation found only in God's grace in Christ, warned against sin, preached judgment and wrath to come for the unrepentant sinner, and also described heaven's glories" (viii). Grant's sermons are reflective of his pastoral ministry of over forty years to the Baptists in Grantown-on-Spey.

The sermons themselves are actually sermon briefs versus full manuscripts and were probably all recorded by the church clerk rather than produced in writing by Grant himself. The collection comprises over forty sermons from the year 1851 and a few selections from the following spring. Wilder arranges the sermons chronologically, thereby giving the reader some sense of how the congregation would have received the sermons in the first hearing.

Among the sermons, Grant preached a cluster on Matthew 12–16 during 1851. In these sermons, Grant contended for the souls of his hearers. He particularly exhorted them in the areas of hypocrisy noted in the Gospel texts. He distinguished between hypocrites and true believers by how they respond to a truth that rebukes their sinful hearts. He warned, "When hypocrites are made known, it gives an unpardonable offence . . . just because it sends a stab to their heart." A true child of God will receive the rebuke of the Lord's truth (69). In a later sermon, he continues his



pleas against the hardened heart. He pleads, "We should see the necessity of being born again. Unless God changes our heart, it never shall see heaven . . . So unless the Lord converts us, we of necessity must go to hell" (77). Grant returned to the theme of the necessity of salvation drawing on both Old and New Testament texts. In November 1851, he preached a two-sermon series on preparing to meet God from Amos 4 (123, 129). These gospel appeals were a constant feature of Grant's sermons. Since there are no indices to sort the sermons by theme or biblical text, the contemporary reader might find that simply reading through the sermons in order (perhaps even devotionally) an apt way to be exposed to the preaching of this passionate, Scottish Baptist pastor.

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