

BAPTISTS WHO CONFESS THE NICENE FAITH

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In the first half of 1974, W. A. (Wally Amos) Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, a leading church of the Southern Baptist Convention, delivered evening lectures on the articles of the Christian faith. In his first lecture, he showed how the ancient creeds develop from our primal confession in baptism. Creeds “come out of the desire of faith to express itself before others. It is impossible for a man to accept the faith of Jesus Christ and not have on the inside of him a burning, irrepressible desire to say something about it.” “The confession of faith, it arises out of the soul of the born again Christian.”¹ Our first confession of the Christian creed occurs in water baptism.

This essay argues that Baptists have historically joined other Christians to confess Jesus Christ in the robust dogmatic terms of the oldest and most universal creedal tradition, that of Nicaea. They called the regenerate to confess “Jesus is Lord,” a creed that comes through the church but invariably arises out of the soul. When Christians cannot confess the universal creed together, then a crisis, existential and ecclesial, appears. Christians either gather to honor the eternal Word who became the Lamb to arise from death and ascend to his eternal throne, or they should not gather. Ecclesial cooperation is incommensurate with equivocation regarding the fundamental articles of the faith. If we cannot agree on the reality of the sacred name of Jesus Christ, then no ground for Christian fellowship exists.

To defend this thesis, we first acknowledge the severe challenges arising from within American evangelicalism. Classical Christianity has increasingly been displaced by unorthodox confessions. American evangelicals in the twentieth century properly fought to preserve orthodox epistemology, but heretical and errant teachings about divine ontology nevertheless came

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¹W. A. Criswell, “Concerning Creeds and Confession of Faith,” in *The W. A. Criswell Sermon Library* (January 16, 1974; <https://wacriswell.com/sermons/1974/concerning-creeds-and-confession-of-faith/>).

to prominence. After winning the battle for the Bible, we began losing the war for God.

Secondly, to understand the gravity of the situation, we recall the Christological Trinitarianism taught by Scripture. This dogma was preserved in the classical creedal tradition stemming from the first ecumenical council of Nicaea. Over 300 bishops comprised that council, having converged from all over the Roman Empire upon a small imperial city in Asia Minor 1,700 years ago. Their exegetical conclusions were summarized in the first draft of the most ancient formal creed of our faith. The settled form of the Nicene Creed came during the second ecumenical council, which met in the imperial capitol of Constantinople in 381 to cleanse the church of the doctrinal detritus of Arianism, semi-Arianism, Marcellianism, Apollinarianism, and Pneumatomachianism.

Thirdly, after showing how Scripture's central teachings were recovered by the exegetical work of B. H. Carroll and explicated by L. R. Scarborough, we will review the history of the Baptist reception of the Nicene creedal tradition. Fourthly, we learn how the leading theologians of the Southwest received the creedal tradition of our common faith. Finally, we call for creedal fidelity. The Christian faith necessarily precedes and grounds the Baptist message.

CHALLENGES TO ORTHODOXY IN EVANGELICALISM

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the malleable nature of the otherwise advantageous term, "evangelical," began to appear. Historically, the term was rooted in the long Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and maintained by the Evangelical Revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Evangelicals broadly reflected a common commitment to the "gospel" as taught by theologians from Martin Luther and John Calvin to George Whitefield and John Wesley. In the twentieth century, the trans-denominational movement of American "Evangelicalism" revived the term to distinguish themselves from the acidic theologies of liberalism on their left and the stultifying legalisms

of fundamentalism on their right.²

As the twenty-first century began, political pollsters and social commentators attached the term to controversial social and political ideas. The nearly thorough politicization of a theological term prompted a backlash by younger and ethnically diverse Christians. Evangelicalism's perceived social captivity even prompted some to begin "deconstructing" their faith. Millions of others, classified by Ryan Burge as "Exvangelicals," remained orthodox in doctrine yet fled evangelical churches to escape political rancor and the sexual abuse crisis.³ Meanwhile, Southern Baptists hemorrhaged millions of church members. The so-called "Nones," at 28 percent of the population, now outnumber self-identified evangelicals.⁴

Concurrent with the widespread social appropriation of "evangelical," pollsters detected a surge in heretical and errant views of God and Christ. In 2014, LifeWay Research began measuring the presence of heresy among Americans and evangelicals.⁵ Every two years over the next decade, that institute issued reports with titles like, "Americans Love the Bible and Are Fuzzy on the Details," "American Theology is a Mix of Orthodox Belief and Shifting Opinions," and "American Theological Beliefs Changed to Suit Post-Pandemic Practice."⁶ In 2022, their State of Theology report found that majorities held Arian views of Christ and depersonalized the Holy Spirit.⁷ Early in 2025, George Barna, the dean of American religious pollsters, also took a detailed look at American theology. He concluded that

²See Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947); James Leo Garrett Jr., "Who Are the 'Evangelicals'?" in *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"?* ed. Garrett, E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 33–63; David Dockery, ed., *Southern Baptists & American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993); Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals? A Second Decadal Reassessment," *Ecclesiology* 2 (2006): 195–212; idem, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), xiii-xvi.

³Jim Davis, Michael Graham, and Ryan P. Burge, *The Great Dechurching: Who's Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2023), 73.

⁴Kate Shellnut, "Southern Baptist Membership Lowest in Fifty Years," *Christianity Today* (30 April 2025; <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/04/southern-baptist-convention-decline-churches-baptism-report/>).

⁵"Americans Believe in Heaven, Hell, and a Little Bit of Heresy" (LifeWay Research, 28 October 2014, accessed 12 February 2015; <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2014/10/28/americans-believe-in-heaven-hell-and-a-little-bit-of-heresy>).

⁶"State of Theology," (LifeWay Research, accessed 21 May 2025; <https://research.lifeway.com/stateoftheology/>).

⁷"2022 State of American Theology Study Research Report" (LifeWay Research, 2022; accessed 21 May 2025; <https://research.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Ligonier-State-of-Theology-2022-White-Paper.pdf>).

only 16% of self-proclaimed Christians actually “believe in the Trinity.”⁸

Perhaps we are tempted to confine the problem to the people in the pew, but it existed longer behind the preacher’s podium and the teacher’s lectern. In 2023, I was invited to address American Evangelicals by B&H Academic at its large annual luncheon during the meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Diego, California. They asked me to comment on my research into the state of preaching the Trinity, published in Brandon Smith’s volume, *The Trinity in the Canon*.⁹ That research showed the problem has been building since the late seventeenth century. My prepared comments mirror Paul’s experience in Acts 17:

Surveying the preaching of the Christian churches in the modern West makes me feel like Paul walking through Athens. The Apostle was “deeply distressed” because the Athenians “worship in ignorance.” You see, God holds man accountable for his worship. And Christian preaching without proclaiming God the Trinity is leading people “to an unknown God.” With all the recent works on the Trinity—its biblical basis, historical progress (and regress), systematic coherence, and contemporary relevance—we know that God “overlooked the times of ignorance.” But I believe, from the depths of my soul, that he “now commands all people everywhere to repent,” including evangelical preachers and teachers.¹⁰

CHRISTOLOGICAL TRINITARIANISM

I wrote *God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits* before the 2016 controversy made us acutely aware of how some evangelical theologians were testing the bounds of Christianity. In that book, which engaged both ancient and modern hermeneutics, I asked whether Scripture teaches the doctrine

⁸Cultural Research Center, “Most Americans—including Churchgoers—Reject the Trinity” (Arizona Christian University, 26 March 2025; https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/AWVI-2025_03_Most-Americans-Reject-the-Trinity_FINAL_03_26_2025.pdf).

⁹Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Preaching,” in Brandon D. Smith, *The Trinity in the Canon: A Biblical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Proposal* (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2023), 369-400.

¹⁰Handwritten notes, The Yarnell Theological Library copy of Smith, ed., *The Trinity in the Canon*, 368.

of the Trinity and concluded the Bible indeed reveals this God and no other. In 2023, I offered evangelical leaders four reasons why we must return to preaching God the Trinity: “First, God is Trinity. Second, the text reveals the Trinity. Third, the gospel demands he be preached. And finally, preaching God without Trinity is simply not preaching ‘the faith once for all delivered to the saints’ (Jude 3).”¹¹

Let us recall the Christological Trinitarian creed taught in the biblical canon. Benajah Harvey Carroll said, “the creed of the church” is of “inesestimable value” and derives from Scripture.¹² He started his discussion of the creed’s biblical basis from Ephesians 4:1-16. The importance of this anchor text, he said, “cannot be overstated. It would be well to memorize this section verbatim.”¹³ Carroll treated “the nine unities” of Ephesians 4 dogmatically, rightly starting with the Trinity: “one God and Father,” “one Lord, who is Jesus Christ,” and “one Spirit.” He also centered the Trinity in the Person of Christ.

The work of God the Trinity necessarily highlights the atonement worked by Jesus. His cross, moreover, requires us to delineate “the mystery” of his incarnation, his resurrection, and his eternal glory.¹⁴ The five economic unities of Ephesians 4 (calling to salvation, the body of the church, the act of faith, water baptism, and the system of faith) derive from and depend on the ontological reality of God. His grace toward his creatures is focused in the cross of Christ.¹⁵

According to Carroll, Paul’s understanding of “the unity of the faith” refers to “the system or body of truth constituting the creed of the church.” We teach this creed to preserve the church from blasphemy, heresy, and error and to help it attain maturity. The biblical creed

certainly teaches the importance of all gospel truth, and the necessity of bringing all babes in Christ, or new converts, into unity of belief to safeguard them from divisions and from becoming the prey of cunning craftiness, to hedge against shifting from doctrine to doctrine, all in order to

¹¹Handwritten notes, The Yarnell Theological Library copy of Smith, ed., *The Trinity in the Canon*, 368.

¹²B. H. Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, ed. J. B. Cranfill, An Interpretation of the English Bible (1948; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973), 145.

¹³Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 139.

¹⁴Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 146.

¹⁵Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 139.

their reciprocal growth, so as to affect the maturity of the church in Christian knowledge and the consequent maturity of development as the body of Christ.¹⁶

“The faith” to which the apostles refer, Carroll continued, is “a sacred deposit of truth,” “a deposit delivered once for all.” This deposit must be guarded against heretics who creep “privately” into the church to ravage the flock of God.¹⁷ The apostles repeatedly expanded upon the faith which constitutes the creed of the church, so its articles may not be treated as “few and simple.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, while the creed is comprised of “many articles,” they are “clearly defined,” and “there is unity in them.”¹⁹

Carroll demonstrated exegetically how the creed taught by the Apostles centered on the personal reality of Jesus Christ: “Particularly,” the Apostles, “touched the personality of the Messiah, his pre-existence and deity,” as well as his humiliation, his expiatory death, alongside his bodily resurrection, “his ascension and exaltation to the throne of the universe as a royal priest,” and his coming again to “raise the dead and judge the world.”²⁰

To show how the canon highlighted the nine unities of Ephesians 4, Carroll listed Matthew 16:16 and 28:18-20, Romans 12:4-5 and 8:28-30, and 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and 12:12-31. The great historical theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, similarly emphasized Matthew 16:16-18, Philippians 2:6-11, and 1 Timothy 2:5 and 3:16.²¹ We could also add the concise summaries of the Christian faith in Romans 1:1-4 and 8:34, 1 Corinthians 8:6 and 15:3-8, Ephesians 1:3-14, 2 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 6:1-2, 1 Peter 3:18-22, and Revelation 20.

Carroll ascribed particular importance to 1 Timothy 3:16, which the dean of creed scholars, J. N. D. Kelly of Oxford University, said was an early hymn “setting out the essentials of the *paradosis* [i.e. tradition] in rhythmic lines.”²² Carroll said this early formal creed “summarizes the elements of the truth—at least the elements that enter into the mystery of godliness,” in six parts:²³

¹⁶Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 144.

¹⁷Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 144.

¹⁸Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 145.

¹⁹Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 146-47.

²⁰Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 145-46.

²¹Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 130-36.

²²J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 1972), 19.

²³Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 146.

1. God was manifested in the flesh.
2. So manifested he was justified, or vindicated, by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, in offering up himself as a sacrifice, in his resurrection, [and] by his descent at Pentecost.
3. Though veiled in the flesh, he was recognized by the angels.
4. Preached among the nations.
5. Believed on in the world.
6. Received up into glory.²⁴

We must also take note of the primal confession, “Jesus is Lord.” When confessed truly, we are saying this one man, named “Jesus,” is also the one and only “Lord,” who is God. From this proto creed, Nicene Trinitarianism and Chalcedonian Christology inevitably developed: the one Christ is truly God, and he is truly man. He is the one Lord God, the second Person of the Trinity, who created the world, governs it, and continually reigns over it. He became man, he died, and he arose from death. He then ascended to the eternal throne. This primary creed limits neither his humanity nor his deity. It exalts Jesus as eternal God and honors him as perfect man.

According to 1 Corinthians 12:3, the primal confession, “Jesus is Lord,” can only be said with truth by the Holy Spirit. According to Romans 10:9-10, orally confessing “Jesus is Lord,” and believing in one’s heart that God has raised him from the dead, brings personal salvation. And according to Philippians 2:11, one day every knee must bow, and every tongue must confess, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” “Jesus is Lord” constitutes the base creed of Christianity, and it must be confessed without qualification. If there is any wavering of conscience regarding the very person, very deity, and very humanity of Christ, we may not deem it a true confession.

The second president of Southwestern Seminary, L. R. Scarborough, often shared his own confession about Jesus as Lord. Our longest-serving president exalted the primal creed of the Christian faith, using the Nicene language of “very God of very God,” during his inaugural address. “This institution,” he proclaimed,

rests in the confident conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, very God of very God, born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and showed forth a marvelous ministry among men, was crucified by Pontius Pilate on the insistence

²⁴Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 146.

of the Jews, buried in Joseph's tomb, rose the third day triumphant over death, hell, and the grave, and ascended to the Father's throne and sits today regnant at his right hand, our Priest, Prophet, King of Kings, and Redeemer, forever interceding for us. We believe and teach without the quiver of a spiritual muscle...²⁵

Unlike Carroll and Scarborough, those who teach heresy and error qualify either the unity of Christ's person, the verity of his deity, and/or the verity of his humanity. As I seek to demonstrate in the forthcoming second volume of *Theology for Every Person, Word*, every major heresy and error diminishes Jesus Christ in some way. False teachers alter the truth about our one Lord God, the eternal Word who became flesh, died, arose from death, and ascended to his eternal throne, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead and whither he shall reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. From Sabellianism, Arianism, and Apollinarianism, to Marcellianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism, as well as Monotheletism, Islam, and Celestial Flesh, alongside Kenoticism, the Jesus Seminar, and Eternal Functional Subordination, ancient heresies and modern errors challenge the honor of the Person of Jesus Christ and his work in some programmatic way.

THE BAPTISTS AND THE CREED

Recently, I delivered three papers on the biblical genius and contemporary relevance of the Nicene Creed at Dallas Theological Seminary. While the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectures will be published in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, they can also be found on the Nicene Creed website (www.thenicene Creed.org), which Matthew Barrett of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary helped me develop. Professor Barrett and I are thankful for the written and recorded contributions to that website by orthodox scholars from across the Christian traditions, including Phillip Cary, Megan DeVore, J. V. Fesko, Fred Sanders, Scott Swain, and Adonis Vidu, alongside Southern Baptists like Andrew Brown, Matthew Emerson, Griffin Gulledege, Stephen Lorance, Rhyne Putman, Brandon Smith, and Luke Stamps, among others.

These scholars visibly demonstrate today the longstanding truth that James Leo Garrett Jr. disclosed in his magisterial volume, *Baptist Theology*:

²⁵L. R. Scarborough, *A Modern School of the Prophets: A History of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1939), 170.

A Four-Century Study. “In summary,” he wrote, “Baptists have adhered to the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines formulated by the first four ecumenical councils and expressed in the earliest Christian creeds.”²⁶ Let us take a few moments to rehearse the credal history of the free churches known as Baptists. Like their spiritual cousins on the European continent, the evangelical Anabaptists, the early English Baptists affirmed the ancient creeds and wrote Reformation-style confessions.

Among the evangelical Anabaptists, Leonhard Schiemer wrote a commentary on the Apostles Creed, while Balthasar Hubmaier formed it for congregational prayer.²⁷ Pilgram Marpeck advocated the most stringent form of the Nicene faith, the Athanasian Creed.²⁸ And Hans de Ries wrote several confessions which drew Mennonites away from the Christological errors of both the Hoffmanites and the Socinians. De Ries helped ensure the final triumph of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in that denomination.²⁹ It would be helpful for us not only to distinguish the Continental Anabaptists from the English Baptists,³⁰ but to reject the tired trope that the Anabaptists were fundamentally heretical.

John Smyth, the first English Baptist pastor, translated the 1609 confession of de Ries and recommended his congregation accept it.³¹ Thomas Helwys, unhappy about union with the Mennonites, dissented and took the remaining Baptists home to England.³² Starting in London then spreading to England, Scotland, Ireland, and the English colonies of North America, the modern Baptist movement blossomed, despite persecution by intolerant Royalists and Puritans alike.³³ The Baptists commonly expressed their faith

²⁶James Leo Garrett Jr., *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 21.

²⁷Leonhard Schiemer, “The Apostles’ Creed: An Interpretation,” in Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism: Classic Devotional Resources* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 1995), 27-40; Balthasar Hubmaier, “Twelve Articles in Prayer Form,” in H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 1989), 234-40.

²⁸“The Athanasian Creed,” in John D. Rempel, ed., *Jörg Maler’s Kunstbuch: Writings of the Pilgram Marpeck Circle* (Kitchener, Canada: Pandora, 2010), 499-501.

²⁹Cornelius J. Dyck, *Hans de Ries: A Study in Second Generation Dutch Anabaptism* (Kitchener, Canada: Pandora, 2023), 217-32.

³⁰Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “The Reformation and Baptist Origins: The Unrefuted Conclusion of B. R. White,” *Journal of Baptist Studies* 9 (2018): 16-30.

³¹Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 73.

³²Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “‘We Believe with the Heart and with the Mouth Confess’: The Engaged Piety of the Early General Baptists,” *Baptist Quarterly* 44 (2011): 36-58.

³³Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Roger Williams’s Contribution to Religious Liberty and Baptists: A Reassessment,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 67 (2024): 9-30.

in formal confessions and catechisms, and the best of these free church documents affirm the Nicene faith.

In 2020, I evaluated the Trinitarianism of twelve of the most prominent Baptist confessions from the first Baptist confession of 1610 to the 2000 revision of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. I used three measures to determine the dogmatic health of those confessions:

1. Does the confession use the ontological language of “substance,” “essence,” “nature,” or “Godhead”?
2. Does it use the relational language of “person” or “subsistence,” or of “generation” or “begotten” and “procession”?
3. Does it use numerical language of “Trinity,” “Triune,” or “Three” with “One”?

The results suggest how the sickness of heresy can harm the health of the church.

The most widely used confessions in the General Baptist tradition, which was generally recognized to have suffered most from the resurgence of Christological heresy in the seventeenth century and Trinitarian heresy in the eighteenth century, were weak by all three measures. The General Baptists’ *Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations* (1651) used no measurable classical Trinitarian language, while their *Standard Confession* (1660) satisfied only one measure. The *Principles of Faith of the Sandy Creek Association* (1816) satisfied two of the three measures. The only other major Baptist confession to demonstrate like weakness was the *Baptist Faith and Message*, which in its first version satisfied only one measure. The 2000 revision slightly improved matters by adding the word, “Triune,” to its description of God.³⁴ Alas, however, according to Garrett, “the Trinity remains one of the most underdeveloped doctrines in the new Baptist Faith & Message.”³⁵ Southern Baptists, busy arguing passionately about human gender roles, failed to confess God fulsomely.

In stark contrast, the Particular Baptist confessions helped that tradition resist Trinitarian and Christological heresies and errors. Reformed

³⁴Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Baptists, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Christian Tradition,” in Matthew Y. Emerson, Christopher W. Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps, *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Towards an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity* (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 78-79.

³⁵Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God, Theology for Every Person, vol. 1* (Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2024), 85.

Baptists almost always privilege the Nicene faith in their confessions, typically satisfying all three measures of classical Trinitarianism.³⁶ For instance, the third article in the lengthy second chapter of *The Second London Confession* employs the orthodox language of divine ontology (“subsistencies,” “substance,” and “essence”) and the eternal relations of origin (“begotten” and “proceeding”), as well as numeric descriptors (“three,” “one,” and “Trinity”), citing text after text to demonstrate the scriptural basis of orthodox Trinitarianism:

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistencies, the Father, the Word (or Son) and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and Eternity, each having the whole Divine Essence, yet the Essence undivided, the Father is of none neither begotten nor proceeding, the Son is Eternally begotten of the Father, the holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and Being; but distinguished by several peculiar, relative properties, and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our Communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.³⁷

In his *Orthodox Catechism* (1680), Particular Baptist pastor Hercules Collins grounded his church’s faith in the Nicene faith through emphasizing both the Nicene Creed (325) and the Athanasian Creed (early sixth century). The Athanasian Creed was an interesting choice to highlight, for it properly elevates the unity and equality of the Persons and anathematizes any who refuse to believe it.³⁸ The Church of England’s *Thirty-Nine Articles* likewise stress the Trinity, requiring the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles’

³⁶Yarnell, “Baptists, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Christian Tradition,” 78. While J. P. Boyce has traditionally been presented as ensconced in that tradition, his *Abstract of Principles* fails to incorporate adequate Trinitarian language. Moreover, Boyce’s subordinationist statements show the founder of Southern Seminary kicking “against the goads of classical Trinitarianism.” Yarnell, “Baptists, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Christian Tradition,” 73-74.

³⁷*The Second London Confession* (1677) provided the basis for *The Philadelphia Confession* (1742). *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London, 1677), in William L. Lumpkin and Bill J. Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd rev. ed. (Prussia: PA: Judson Press, 2011), 237.

³⁸Pelikan, *Credo*, 76-77.

creeds “thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.”³⁹ Particular Baptists thus stood within the classical faith tradition upheld by the Church of England. According to Collins, “all those that would be accounted Christians” must believe and embrace all three symbols of the Nicene faith.⁴⁰

Despite the descent of many into gross heresy, not all General Baptists neglected the Nicene faith. The Christological heresies of the influential Messenger, Matthew Caffyn, prompted Thomas Monck to publish *An Orthodox Creed* (1679). Its first eight articles generously employ the classical language of the ecumenical tradition, affirming not only divine simplicity, immutability, and eternity, but also the eternal relations of origin of the divine Persons, the “coequal, coessential, and coeternal” nature of God, Christ’s hypostatic union with humanity, and the communication of properties, alongside the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Echoing the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, *An Orthodox Creed* said the three Nicene creeds “ought thoroughly to be received, and believed.”⁴² The first systematic theologian among Baptists, the General Baptist Thomas Grantham, also included the Nicene Creed (381) in his catechism for children.⁴³

The troublesome reactions of Baptists to the rise of Trinitarian heresy during the Salters’ Hall Debates of 1719 reinforced the need for Baptists and other evangelicals to remember and rehearse the Trinitarian faith taught by the classical creeds. In 2019, I drew five lessons from that controversy, including that “the lack of [confessional] subscription may have led some Non-subscribers to see classical Christianity as less important.”⁴⁴ And that “any attempt to argue that the eternal Son possesses less authority

³⁹“Articles of Religion,” art. VIII, in *The Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1969), 696.

⁴⁰Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and G. Stephen Weaver (1680; RBAP, 2014), 4. The two creeds form the concluding chapter of the catechism. Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 117-20.

⁴¹*An Orthodox Creed, or A Protestant Confession of Faith, Being an Essay to Unite and Confirm All True Protestants* (London, 1679), in Lumpkin and Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 300-305.

⁴²*An Orthodox Creed*, art. XXXVIII, in Lumpkin and Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 337.

⁴³Thomas Grantham, *St. Paul’s Catechism: Or, A Brief and Plain Explication of the Six Principles of the Christian Religion* (London, 1687), 25-26.

⁴⁴Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “‘The Point in Question’ at Salters’ Hall: Baptists Contending for Trinity, Scripture and Freedom,” in Stephen Copson, ed., *Trinity, Creed, and Confusion: The Salters’ Hall Debates of 1719* (Oxford, England: Oxford Centre for Baptist Studies, 2020), 154.

than God the Father was met in the eighteenth century with the declaration that this constitutes heresy, specifically Arianism.⁴⁵ Our orthodox Baptist forefathers would doubtlessly express alarm at the contemporary doctrine of Eternal Functional Subordination.⁴⁶

The distress imposed upon orthodox Baptists by errant teachers inserting themselves into our tradition between 1719 and 2019 is a far larger story than can be rehearsed here. However, the theologians of the Southwest show that we can incorporate the Nicene faith in our teaching. Recovering the ancient creed would help turn the tide against the dominance of evangelical heresy and error in our day and bless our children and grandchildren. Listen to voices from the orthodox seminary as they clearly teach classic creedal theology.

THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE SOUTHWEST

The theologians of the Southwest were forced to contend for the utility of creeds against those pushing a false creed under the guise of having no creed. In the 1823 edition of his *Christian Baptist* newspaper, Alexander Campbell denounced creeds as “invented by whimsical Metaphysicians, Christian Philosophers, and Rabbinical Doctors, and Enthusiastic Preachers.”⁴⁷ Protesting against the use of a creed and against examining baptismal candidates for the evidence of true conversion, Campbell taught that regeneration comes merely by the rational confession of Jesus as Son of God with water baptism. The Baptists of Campbell’s day replied that regeneration is a sovereign work of the Spirit, and that salvation requires true faith. Water baptism does not cause one to be born again but witnesses to one’s being born again.

David Bebbington refers to the havoc Campbell caused among Baptists with his dogmas of baptismal regeneration and anti-creedalism. The first Baptist church in Nashville split in the 1820s when a Campbellite pastor surreptitiously chose to enforce weekly communion, stopped examining baptismal candidates for conversion, and “adopted the New Testament as

⁴⁵Yarnell, “‘The Point in Question’ at Salters’ Hall,” 156.

⁴⁶Cf. Malcolm B. Yarnell III and Karen A. Yarnell, “Trinity and Authority,” 5 parts, *Pro Gloria Christi* (June 2016; <https://www.malcolmyarnell.com/2016/>); Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “From God to Humanity: A Trinitarian Method for Theological Anthropology,” and “Response to Bruce A. Ware, Matthew Y. Emerson, and Luke Stamps,” in Keith S. Whitfield, ed., *Trinitarian Theology: Theological Models and Doctrinal Application* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2019), 63-94, 157-73.

⁴⁷David W. Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 95.

its sole rule of faith and practice.”⁴⁸ Despite their protestations that they have “No creed but the Bible,” Criswell said that Campbellites have “one of the most bickering creeds of any denominational group in the earth.”⁴⁹ A review of the Southwest tradition on creeds may help other Southern Baptists understand our continuing need for Nicene dogma.

BENAJAH HARVEY CARROLL

The founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary also objected to Campbell’s anti-creedalism. B. H. Carroll and Calvin Goodspeed delivered the first set of theological lectures at the new seminary as it became a freestanding institution.⁵⁰ Their text was the seminary’s own confession, *The New Hampshire Confession of Faith*. That confession later provided the shell for the first half of the new Baptist confession in 1925. Prior to commenting on our seminary’s foundational confession, Carroll discussed the basis and utility of creeds among Christians. Seven critical ideas emerge in his introduction:

1. A “creed” is what you believe; a “confession” communicates your creed.⁵¹
2. The Bible contains numerous examples of the Christian creed.⁵²
3. The Christian faith is ruled by Scripture. A creed, therefore, does not govern the Bible but expresses our interpretation of the Bible.
4. A creed lets prospective members know what a church believes.
5. A creed helps identify whether a teacher is orthodox or heretical.
6. Don’t trust anyone who says their only creed is the Bible. “That is not the point. What does your church understand the Bible to teach?”⁵³
7. The Christian creed is useful when you prepare to ordain

⁴⁸Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries*, 96.

⁴⁹Criswell, “Concerning Creeds and Confession of Faith.”

⁵⁰Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51 (2009): 130-31.

⁵¹B. H. Carroll, “General Discussion,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 51 (2009): 134.

⁵²Carroll, “General Discussion,” 138-39.

⁵³Carroll, “General Discussion,” 135.

a minister, or when you “try a man before the church for heresy.”⁵⁴ In other words, the creed is used for ministerial authorization and pedagogical discipline.

For Carroll, Scripture remains the norm, but a creed tells you what a teacher or church believes Scripture means. Carroll was impatient with those who denied the necessity and utility of creeds. Indeed, he deemed it important that Christians continually deepen their understanding of the creed. In his theology lectures, effectively a running commentary on the most popular confession of Baptists in America, he summarized the argument he made earlier in his lectures on Ephesians: “The longest creed ever written is more valuable than the shortest.”⁵⁵

Noting how theological liberals made anti-creedalism fashionable, Carroll believed heresy lurks behind disdain for dogmatic clarity. Anti-creedalism also undermines the moral conduct of the church. The modern cry, “Doctrine divides, mission unites,” contradicted his conviction. Carroll wrote, “The more we reduce the number of the creed articles, the more we undermine practical religion.”⁵⁶ True Christian faith produces true Christian practice. Our problem is not with creeds but with false creeds. Indeed, the prevalence of false teaching prompted Carroll to call for the vigorous use of the true creed. “To Christ and the apostles false creeds were the most deadly things, and called for the use of the knife.”⁵⁷

To ground Christian unity in divine unity, Carroll expounded Paul’s nine unities. He prioritized the truth of God, who judges theological idolatry, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The orthodox confession of “One Lord,” “limits revelation, mediation, priesthood and kingly rule to Jesus the Messiah, the image of God. How vast the sweep of this exclusive truth, and how multitudinous the immoralities it outlaws.”⁵⁸ Christology anchors the faith. Christian unity in the Spirit comes through the one calling of true believers gathered in the church by a living faith through their witness of water baptism to “the faith.”⁵⁹

According to Carroll, the Christian church’s dogmatic system of fundamental propositions, which Scripture names “the faith,” constitutes

⁵⁴Carroll, “General Discussion,” 135-37.

⁵⁵Carroll, “General Discussion,” 136.

⁵⁶Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 140.

⁵⁷Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 141.

⁵⁸Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 141.

⁵⁹Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 141-44.

“the creed of the church.” It is a “body of truth” and is “of inestimable value.” Again, the founder of our seminary prioritized “the nature, being, attributes, and offices of the triune God,”⁶⁰ but only as centered on Christ. After all, one may believe in God but neglect the saving truth that Jesus is Lord.⁶¹

WALTER THOMAS CONNER

The leading systematic theologian in the first half century of Southwestern Seminary emphasized the person of Christ, so much so that he always treated the person of Christ before the Doctrine of God. Garrett later defended W. T. Conner’s effort to make Christology the ground of theology proper: “This fact may be explained largely by Conner’s stress on Christ as the Revealer of God and his insistence that the Christian doctrine of God must ‘square with the character, work, and teachings of Christ.’”⁶² Christ is the ground of our knowledge of God.

Due to his disdain for ancient Docetism’s denigration of Jesus, Conner began his own Christology with the humanity of Christ. But against the liberals who dominate modern theology, and who dishonored Christ in his deity, “The Southwestern theologian had no difficulty in accepting the New Testament witness to the virgin birth of Jesus.”⁶³ The virgin birth highlights Christ’s supernatural origin. God thus transcended the laws of sinful heredity.

Conner also defended the bodily death and bodily resurrection of Jesus. He affirmed not only Christ’s human titles but, against liberal biblical scholars, he offered a properly fulsome yet carefully reserved presentation of his deity. Southwestern philosopher of religion Stewart A. Newman noted that Conner, whom he titled “theologian of the Southwest,” “preferred to quote the language of the Athanasian Creed as evidence of his idea that in dealing with matters which are obviously superhuman in character, all human language symbols are inadequate.”⁶⁴

According to Conner, not only is Jesus the human “Christ,” he is also

⁶⁰Carroll, *Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews*, 145.

⁶¹Carroll, “General Discussion,” 136.

⁶²James Leo Garrett Jr., “The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner” (ThD Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954), 205.

⁶³Garrett, “The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner,” 207.

⁶⁴Stewart A. Newman, *W. T. Conner: Theologian of the Southwest* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1964), 124.

divine “Lord.”⁶⁵ Christ’s divine nature is revealed most explicitly in the writings of Paul and John. “According to Conner, the deity of Jesus is firmly embedded in the New Testament. This is found both by ‘the exegesis of particular passages’ and by perceiving ‘the whole spiritual attitude of the early Christians toward Christ.’”⁶⁶ Presaging the arguments of Larry Hurtado and Richard Bauckham, who began turning the tide against the Christological errors endemic in modern biblical scholarship, Conner argued that Christ was not merely the object of the faith of the early Christians. Christ was the object of their worship, too.⁶⁷ Jesus is the God who saves us by becoming the man who atoned for our sin with his blood.

Take note of how Conner argued in a Nicene and Chalcedonian manner. He affirmed Christ is one person, truly God who became truly man. Christ’s personal union of two natures is necessary for salvation to happen. “Christ,” he wrote, “fills for the Christian, then, the whole sphere of God.”⁶⁸ Although a careful systematic scholar, Conner was also a preacher impatient with any who tamper with the biblical and classical doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. Conner protected the unity of Christ’s person, his entire deity, and his assumed humanity:

It is only in Christ that we know God. In Christ we do know God by faith. In him we trust God, surrender to God, find God, experience his love, his redeeming grace and mercy, find the forgiveness of our sins, and the salvation which God alone can give. ... Christ is the incarnation of God. Christ is deity incarnate. Any position that denies this is not Christian. This is not a matter of speculative conclusion; it is a matter of immediate spiritual perception.⁶⁹

There is no room whatsoever for a diminishing or dishonoring of Jesus Christ in the unity of his Person, the truthfulness of his humanity, or the truthfulness of his deity. Any teacher who tinkers with the orthodox dogmas of God and Christ evinces spiritual bankruptcy. Carrying the thought of the theologians of the Southwest forward, I would daresay that

⁶⁵Garrett, “The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner,” 208-10.

⁶⁶Garrett, “The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner,” 210.

⁶⁷Garrett, “The Theology of Walter Thomas Conner,” 210.

⁶⁸Walter Thomas Conner, *Revelation and God: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1936), 180-81.

⁶⁹W. T. Conner, *Revelation and God*, 181.

any teacher who diminishes Christ should be granted no place of honor in this Seminary, among Baptists in Texas, or among Southern Baptists and evangelicals generally. Those who dishonor Christ have no place whatsoever in the citadels that true Christians built to honor the eternal Lord Jesus.

JAMES LEO GARRETT JR.

Garrett, Conner's student and the leading systematic theologian in the second half century of Southwestern Seminary, so emphasized God the Trinity and the person of Christ that the first volume of his systematic theology was dominated by those two doctrines, while the Work of Christ grounded his second volume. After a prolegomena his first volume provides a long discourse on the biblical basis, historical exegesis, and systematic outworking of God and Trinity.⁷⁰ It concludes with the Person of Christ, Garrett expounding his humanity, exalted titles, and deity, as well as his lordship, kingship, and unity.⁷¹ The lengthier second volume is secured by the work of Christ. Garrett emphasizes Christ's cross and affirms his incarnation, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session.⁷² He rightly approached the Holy Spirit and the doctrines of salvation, the Christian life, the church, and eschatology through Christology.

The classical tradition's emphases upon Trinity and Christology, therefore, anchored, centered, and united Garrett's system. Through steady labor behind his scholarly desk, Garrett both received the truth of Scripture and benefited from the exegetical wisdom of the church. He then explained the fruit of his diligent research from the podium to thousands of students, and beyond via his three great volumes entitled *Baptist Theology*⁷³ and *Systematic Theology*.⁷⁴

At key points, this otherwise gentle theologian also challenged fellow evangelicals who, wittingly or not, toyed with heresy and error. He exhorted those inclined toward "Christology from below" to show

⁷⁰James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2000), 213-337.

⁷¹Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 607-715.

⁷²James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2001), 3-132.

⁷³Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 570-74.

⁷⁴On Garrett's character, see Malcolm B. Yarnell III, "James Leo Garrett Jr. (1925-2020), the Gentleman Theologian," *Together for the Gospel* (February 11, 2020). On his theological emphases, see idem, "James Leo Garrett Jr.: Systematic Theology," in David S. Dockery, W. Madison Grace, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III, eds., *Shapers of the Southwestern Theological Tradition* (Fort Worth, TX: Seminary Hill Press, 2025), 143-56.

“adequate inclusion of the preexistence, deity, and lordship of Jesus.”⁷⁵ He also warned that Kenoticism, which has proponents among conservative evangelicals, threatens “the loss of the divine nature.”⁷⁶ Garrett, concerned about Christological heresy, identified not one but two such heretical “incursions” into Baptist theology.⁷⁷ The theologians of the Southwest, from Carroll to Conner to Garrett, have long defended the orthodox faith.

CONCLUSION

Two decades ago, David S. Dockery, today’s leading theologian of the Southwest, and Timothy George together argued the Nicene faith unites believers while other emphases can pull us apart. Dockery wrote, “We must take seriously the biblical call to unity (John 17; Eph. 4) in accord with the Nicene affirmation of the oneness and universality of the Church—as reflected in the *Orthodox Confession* (1678).”⁷⁸ George wanted to renew Baptist theology by retrieving orthodoxy: “This is why the framers of the *Second London Confession* of 1689 identified themselves with what they called ‘that wholesome Protestant theology’ of the Reformation, and why the framers of *An Orthodox Creed*, a General Baptist confession of 1678, included the full text of the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed in their statement of faith.”⁷⁹

In January of last year, Steven McKinion of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and I sounded the alarm that the greatest challenge to the faith once for all delivered to the saints in our day comes from the novel doctrine of Eternal Functional Subordination.⁸⁰ In May, theologians from every Southern Baptist seminary joined with pastors and university scholars to ask Southern Baptists to add the Nicene Creed to the *Baptist Faith and Message*.⁸¹ We hoped our own family of Baptists might begin retrieving orthodox Christianity. In September, however, the Executive

⁷⁵Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 609-10, 695.

⁷⁶Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 715.

⁷⁷Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 44-46, 549, 570-74.

⁷⁸David S. Dockery, “A Call for Renewal, Consensus, and Cooperation,” in David S. Dockery and Timothy George, *Building Bridges* (Nashville, TN: Convention, 2007), 33.

⁷⁹Timothy George, “Is Jesus a Baptist?” in Dockery and George, *Building Bridges*, 45.

⁸⁰Steven McKinion and Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “First Person: For Baptist Confessionalism,” *Baptist Press* (January 4, 2024).

⁸¹Malcolm B. Yarnell III, “Article XIX: The Creed,” *Pro Gloria Christi* (May 29, 2024; <https://www.malcolmyarnell.com/2024/05/article-xix-creed.html>). On the history of this proposal, see idem, “On Confessions and Creeds: Recent Writings and Presentations,” *Pro Gloria Christi* (June 15, 2024; <https://www.malcolmyarnell.com/2024/06/on-confessions-and-creeds-writings-and.html>).

Committee denied the motion by Stephen Lorance, a graduate of both Southeastern and Southwestern, to amend our confession by including the Nicene Creed.⁸²

Another way forward might be for the *Baptist Faith and Message* to reincorporate the fuller statement on the Trinity found in *The New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1853).⁸³ That confession, adopted by Southwestern Seminary at its foundation in 1908, satisfies the three measures of classical Trinitarianism.⁸⁴ Alas, while Scarborough served on the committee that drafted the new confession in 1925, the chair of that committee was E. Y. Mullins, the President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He replaced the thicker article of *The New Hampshire Confession* with the thin theological statement of his school's *Abstract of Principles*.⁸⁵ The 2000 committee that revised the *Baptist Faith and Message* implicitly admitted the inadequacy of the 1925 version by adding the term "triune." This rightly forestalled the heresy of Modalism,⁸⁶ but it left the door open to the contrary heresy of Arianism.

One of Garrett's most prominent non-Baptist students, John Fesko, echoes the above arguments. In *The Need for Creeds Today*, Fesko identified two cultural inhibitions to the contemporary use of creeds: the rise of "religious individualism" and a concurrent dislike for tradition.⁸⁷ But this professor of systematic and historical theology at the Reformed Theological Seminary argues the creeds are required. "We presently stand at a crossroads," Fesko writes, "where we must reassess and refamiliarize ourselves with the biblical necessity and the practical virtues of confessions of faith."⁸⁸ Elsewhere, Fesko claimed Eternal Functional Subordination is "semi-Arianism."⁸⁹ We agree on both counts. The classical creeds and

⁸²*Book of Reports of the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention* (Dallas, 2025), 40-41.

⁸³"Declaration of Faith," art. ii, in Lumpkin and Leonard, eds., *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 379.

⁸⁴Yarnell, "Baptists, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Christian Tradition," 79.

⁸⁵Cf. *Abstract of Principles*, art. iii, in James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (1887; reprint, Den Dulk, [n.d.]), appendix B; *The Baptist Faith and Message* (1925; 1963), art. ii, in Lumpkin and Leonard, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 411.

⁸⁶Benjamin S. Cole, "Significance of 1 Word Noted in SBC's Updated Statement of Beliefs," *Baptist Press* (November 3, 2003; <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/significance-of-1-word-noted-in-sbcs-updated-statement-of-beliefs/>).

⁸⁷J. V. Fesko, *The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2020), xiii-xv.

⁸⁸Fesko, *The Need for Creeds Today*, xvi.

⁸⁹J. V. Fesko, "The New Adventures of Old Trinitarian Heresies," *Tabletalk* (December 2019): 22-25.

the ecumenical councils of the Nicene tradition will prove an effective antidote not only against a resurgent Arianism but against its twin sister, “Evangelical Kenoticism.”⁹⁰

In the second week of his 1974 lectures on the creeds, Criswell began by having his church repeat the Apostles’ Creed together. He exclaimed, “Now isn’t that a beautiful thing? And as I have said, this is the universal expression of the Christian faith.” Second, Criswell read the Nicene Creed to his congregation. He exclaimed again, “Now isn’t that a magnificent statement to be universally published as the orthodox faith?” Third, Criswell read the entire Athanasian Creed, which thoroughly defends Christological Trinitarianism. After rehearsing its 44th clause, “This is the Christian Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved,” Criswell exclaimed a third time, “Isn’t that a magnificent thing?”⁹¹

Only after treating the great creeds of the classical tradition did Criswell proceed to explain the *Baptist Faith and Message*. He clearly understood our convention’s confession stands in a long line of Christian expressions of the one true Christian creed. Standing beside the theologians of the Southwest, that illustrious pastor thereby affirmed all three creeds of the Nicene faith are a necessary and effective means for teaching our people the basic truths about God and Christ and for defending the faith against heresies and errors. My prayer is that such wisdom would again lead Baptists. May our corner of American evangelicalism again put the classical creeds of the Christian faith front and center in our confessions.

The hour is late, and the day is darkening, but the Son of God promised he would come again. May we learn to sing even now the great truths about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is one Person, truly God and truly man. He died, arose, ascended, and will return to manifest his everlasting kingdom. Of him, John says, “I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and everything in them say, ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to the one seated on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped” (Rev 5:13-14). When he comes, may the Lord Jesus be pleased to find the theologians of the Southwest, the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention, and evangelicals in general faithfully upholding his honor with the universal church, as we worship him on his eternal throne.

⁹⁰Stephen J. Wellum, *The Person of Christ: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 128-34.

⁹¹W. A. Criswell, “The Great Confessions of Christendom” (January 23, 1974; <https://wacriswell.com/sermons/1974/the-great-confessions-of-christendom/>).