



Diagnosis and the Modern Church

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Diagnosis and the Modern Church

Tom Ascol

The Importance of Diagnosis

Last year, as a result of nasty fall, my daughter found it very painful to bend her arm. The physician who examined her probed and studied the elbow area before finally ordering x-rays. Based on his findings, he concluded that there was no fracture of any bones, and that she just needed to be careful for awhile until the sprain healed. After a week the pain lingered on. A second doctor, after studying the case for a few minutes, began to probe Sarah's wrist where he quickly discovered a previously unknown sore spot. He had, quite literally, put his finger on the real source of her problem. The painful elbow was a symptom. A fractured growth plate in the wrist was the cause. Six weeks in a cast corrected the problem and prevented the serious difficulties which could have otherwise arisen.

This incident illustrates a very important principle: a proper prescription can be offered only after a proper diagnosis has been made. This is no less true in the world of Christian living, than in the world of medicine. Misdiagnosis in either realms can be deadly.

Problematic symptoms must be recognized and carefully analyzed. But it is never enough simply to eradicate the symptoms; their causes must be identified and addressed. Jesus lays the foundation for this principle in His warning against false prophets: "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). Their fruits are symptomatic of their true nature. Bad fruit indicates a bad tree. Good fruit indicates a good tree (Luke 6:43-45). A bad tree is not made good simply by picking off its bad fruit.

Both the physician and the pastor are involved in the work of diagnosis and prescription. In recognition of this the Puritan designation of the pastor as a "physician of the soul" is very appropriate. Just as any self-respecting physician will labor to become increasingly skilled in the practice of medicine in order to promote physical health so too the serious pastor must be diligent in the ministry of the Word in order to promote spiritual health (2 Tim. 2:15).

On the contemporary church scene perhaps there is no greater need than proper diagnosis of some troubling symptoms. Evangelicalism is becoming increasingly enigmatic. The more evangelical churches multiply and grow, the more seemingly irrelevant they become to modern men and women. All of our efforts, programs and strategies are failing to stem the tide of immorality and religious indifference in our nation. Why is this?

Before offering suggestions in response to this important question, we must first consider two specific symptoms which indicate that the modern evangelical church may indeed have serious problems.

The Symptom of Meaningless Membership

One obvious indicator is the lack of commitment by the majority of our church members. William Pinson, Jr., Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, calls this symptom "church membership without meaning."

Earlier this century Elton Trueblood observed, "The chief reason why the church as we now know it is not more

effective than it is, is the fact that membership has become almost meaningless." He went on to conclude, "Membership is now largely paper membership." The situation has not improved as the twentieth century draws to a close. A significant number of those who are counted as church members never attend a worship service, never participate in their church's life, and make no contribution to its ministry. Such membership is meaningless.

Various solutions have been prescribed in response to this situation. The most prevalent are those which propose simply ignoring the problem in hopes that it really is not all that significant. "It's just a little chest pain--probably nothing to be worried about." A whole new, unbiblical theological category has been constructed to justify this type of attitude. I am referring to the "Carnal Christian" theory as it has been popularized in booklets and tracts. This theory teaches that some Christians simply are not "spiritual" and therefore cannot be expected to do "spiritual" things like attend church, pray, give, fellowship with believers, or grow in grace. Sure, they may miss out on a few rewards in heaven, but "at least they are saved!"

This theory soothes the conscience of a church and its leaders by viewing its "paper members" as on the road to heaven. They should, no doubt, be encouraged to become "spiritual," but even if they never do (the reasoning goes) at least their destiny is secured.

This prescription of doing nothing in response to inactive members fails miserably for the simple reason that it has completely misdiagnosed the problem. Widespread lack of commitment among church members is symptomatic of an inadequate doctrine of salvation in the church. Specific questions need to be asked and answered--questions which are so basic that they are often overlooked and taken for granted: What does it mean to be a believer (i.e. how does he act, respond; what are his spiritual tastes, appetites, etc.) and how does one become one? What is the content of the faith that saves, and how is it expressed?

If these questions are taken to the Scriptures and the full impact of the answer is allowed to inform one's doctrine of salvation, a new assessment of completely inactive church members will necessarily emerge. It becomes impossible to deny the strong probability that many of those who are mere paper members have never been truly converted. Such a conclusion calls for a reevaluation of the evangelistic strategies which initially placed such people on the rolls. A biblical renovation of evangelism--both in its content and methodology--will be in order.

Ernest Reisinger's article, "Lordship and the Nature of Saving Faith," sets forth a biblical foundation for doing just that. Together with Tom Nettles' article on the value of catechisms, it provides a challenge to rethink the whole issue of how evangelism and discipleship are carried out in a church. If the malady is ever to be effectively addressed, its root cause must be uncovered. The first step in curing the disease of widespread inactivity among church members is to return to more biblical patterns of evangelism and discipleship.

The Symptom of Weak Worship

Another symptom of ecclesiastical illness is weak worship. This area of church life has been receiving an increasing amount of attention from leaders within and without the SBC in recent years. The last decade has witnessed the publication of numerous articles and books on the subject. "Ritualistic," "uninviting," "dull," "monotonous," and "uninspiring" are among the terms which have been used to describe the worship services in many typical evangelical churches.

Often such services seem to be ill planned and thoughtlessly entered into. The focus is not on God (as worship in the Bible clearly always is) but on man. The Word of God is too often neglected and worshippers are too often more concerned with what they stand to get out of the service than with what they should put into it. For many church

members, worship has become optional and attendance is based on convenience.

Many prescriptions are being suggested in response to the symptom of weak worship. The Southern Baptist Convention has launched a complete worship enrichment and attendance emphasis entitled "Let's All Go to Church." Among other things this emphasis is designed to help churches focus on the importance of worship while trying to implement change in corporate worship services.

Some of the proposals to enhance worship which are being made today border on the ludicrous. One conference suggested that worship would be improved by replacing white lights with flesh tone bulbs in the auditorium. Other suggestions include: starting a musical ensemble, adding an orchestra, purchasing an electronic keyboard, using visual aids, and removing the pulpit. Nothing is inherently wrong with these ideas. The problem is that they collectively miss the point. Worship is not mere mechanics. It is an encounter. When believers consciously come into the felt presence of God--no matter what color the lights--they will worship.

Church growth specialists talk of making worship "seeker friendly," that is, inviting and non-threatening for unbelievers. If all that is meant by this designation is that we should do our best to befriend unbelievers and make it convenient for them to attend our services (i.e. by providing clear directions, keeping the church property neat and the facilities clean, etc.), then no one should protest. However, the specific proposals which many church growth experts are making clearly demonstrate that this is far from all that they have in mind.

Rather, the philosophy which underlies this new effort to develop "seeker friendly worship" is simply this: find out what unconverted people like and give it to them in your worship services. If they like "Top 40" music, give it to them. If their preference is "Country and Western," change your music style to that. Further, since we are well entrenched in the television age, make sure that the service is fast-pasted with lots of variety. Inevitably this philosophy drives worship toward an entertainment event. The congregation becomes an audience. The worship leaders become actors on a stage, and the service becomes a performance.

In this scenario, the cure is more deadly than the disease. Once again, the problem is misdiagnosis. Weak worship is a symptom of an inadequate theology. Specifically, it betrays a deficient view of God, and a misunderstanding of the essence and basis of worship itself.

Isaiah's worship was far from boring or ineffective. When he recognized that he was in the presence of the thrice-holy God, he could not help but worship. He humbled himself, confessed his sin, received forgiveness and volunteered for service (Isa. 6)

Paul demonstrates the foundation of effective worship in Eph. 1:3-14. What is it that causes him to erupt in adoration and praise to God? Even a cursory reading of those verses reveals the answer. The foundation of genuine worship is the awareness and consideration of God's character and works. God is to be "blessed" because he is the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings" (v.3)

Three times in these verses Paul expresses praise in connection with God's glory (vv. 6, 12, 14). In each instance he is contemplating one aspect of our Trinitarian salvation. God the Father elects us... "to the praise of his glorious grace." God the Son redeems us... "that we should be to the praise of his glory." God the Spirit seals us... "to the praise of his glory."

What do these verses suggest? Precisely this: Our worship will be enhanced as we contemplate and grow in our ability to comprehend the majesty of our triune God in his person and works. If, in the words of J.B. Phillips, "your

God is too small," your worship will inevitably be deficient. In too many churches today the "god" who is being preached is so human-like that he is not worthy of worship (Ps. 50:21).

Mechanics, forms, and styles have their place, but the substance of worship must be centered on God--the biblical God. David Dockery's article on worship establishes this point with biblical clarity and pastoral sensitivity.

Diagnosis and Prescription

So, why is the evangelical church making so little impact on men and women in our society? Not enough programs? Not modern enough? Poor marketing? No. The problem is more basic than any of these. At many crucial points we have lost our spiritual and doctrinal moorings. We have tried to replace genuine spiritual power with man-made schemes.

In one sense what we need is beyond our grasp. We need a fresh visitation of the Spirit's power on our worship and witness. This is beyond our reach, but not beyond our prayers.

In another sense what we need is within our reach. In the closing hours of the twentieth century, the evangelical church in America is in desperate need of a biblical and theological reformation. We need to return to basic principles. Historic principles. Principles which served the Southern Baptist Convention well in its formative years. We need a reformation in both our faith and practice.

The sons of Issachar are described as men who "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32). They had an effective prescription because they made an accurate diagnosis of the days in which they lived. May God raise up more sons of Issachar who, properly understanding the symptoms which become apparent, will be skilled in prescribing biblical remedies as our churches face the twenty-first century.



"The church of Christ is a common hospital, wherein all are in some measure sick of some spiritual disease or other; that we should all have ground of exercising mutually the spirit of wisdom and meekness."

Richard Sibbes



Baptist Worship: A Call for Renewal

David Dockery

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The phrase *worship service* creates a variety of images and reactions. Some think, that's *the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday morning*. Others think of "church" as distinguished from the "Sunday School" hour. Some differentiate the Sunday morning service in general from other church meetings.

Does the phrase *worship service* prompt images of preaching? praise? singing? fellowship?

The diversity of worship practices in today's Southern Baptist churches makes any attempt to discuss this subject a big challenge. The variety of hymns, choruses, and gospel songs in the new *Baptist Hymnal* (1991) underscores this observation. Southern Baptist worship practices reflect high church Anglican styles with an emphasis on the liturgy: a Reformed emphasis that concentrates on the Word of God; Free Church frontier styles of worship that see revivalistic preaching as primary; praise/celebration styles; and newer "body life" and "seeker oriented" services. This article does not advocate any particular style. Instead, I simply want to issue a call for renewal in Southern Baptist worship that focuses on exalting God and reaching people.

What is Meant by Worship?

The English word *worship* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, which developed into worthship and finally worship. As can be seen from the word's derivation, worship is *the act of giving honor to someone of worth*. Thus, to worship God is to ascribe to Him the supreme worth that He alone is worthy to receive.

The Bible does not give a formal definition of worship, but its meaning may be determined from several Bible terms.

The primary New Testament word for worship is *proskyneo*, which literally means "to kiss the hand of one." The verb form occurs 59 times in the New Testament. The word emphasizes exclusive worship addressed to the Lord. Where this verb is used absolutely, it means to share in public worship, to offer prayers of adoration (see Rev. 4:11; 5:9; 7:12; 19:1,3,4).

The most frequently used term is *sebomai* and its various cognates. The word has "fear" as its root meaning and involves reverence that stresses the feeling of awe. The term is used frequently to express a sense of worship (see Acts 18:7,13; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:4; 2 Pet. 1:3; 3:11)

A third term, *latreuo*, is a general term for worship denoting prayer (see Acts 13:2-3); giving (see Rom. 15:27, 2 Cor. 9:12); or the ministry of the gospel (see Rom. 15:16). The word *liturgy* is derived from this word. Basically, *litreuo* describes the total manner of life pleasing to God.

What is the Essence of Worship?

The essence of Christian worship is grounded in the Old Testament revelation, though there are two new elements that are at the heart of the New Testament.

First, Christian worship is the active response to God the Father through the Son. The worshiper stands in a personal relation of son-ship to God on the basis of adoption in Christ. Praise, prayer, preaching, the celebration of ordinances, confession, and giving are all Christ-centered actions. The focus of the church's worship on the exalted Christ gives a new depth and content that could not be achieved in the Old Testament period.

The second new factor is that the worship of God through the Son is in and by the Holy Spirit. Fitting and acceptable worship can only be offered by and through the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Why is Worship Renewal Needed?

The preceding brief overview shows that worship is God-centered. Our worship needs renewal because our church services tend to be human-centered. The biblical view of worship tell us worship is not primarily for people, but for God, as we recognize His glory and exalt His name.

Renewal in our worship will be characterized by at least three thing: (1) a significant emphasis on reading and hearing the preached Word; (2) a high degree of congregational involvement in praise, prayer, singing, giving, and confession; and (3) a view of the ordinances that affirm their mystery and value for spiritual formation.

By contrast, much of Baptist worship tends: (1) to be confused about the purpose and order of worship; (2) to evidence a minimal use of the Bible, especially its public reading; (3) to be passive; and (4) to have an adequate view of the church ordinances, particularly the Lord's Supper.

A variety of circumstances has contributed to our present low view of worship. At least four matters can be identified.

1. The current shift toward an entertainment mentality has created an atmosphere in which church leaders and members come to church expecting to be entertained.
2. The result of the Enlightenment has created overemphasis in some quarters on the rational element or worship.
3. The rise of revivalism has in other sectors created an unbalanced emotional appeal aimed at unbelievers.
4. The general trend toward secularization and adaptation of our culture has diminished the differences between the Christian community and the world.

Each of these has had a different impact on our worship practices, but the combination has created an unwelcomed situation. Worship, which should stand at the heart of our Christian experience, is unable to form, shape, challenge, inspire, enhance, motivate, nourish, or feed us.

How Can Worship Be Improved?

The first step in rediscovering the missing jewel of worship is simply to help the redeemed community recognize that the worship of God is a primary function of the church.

Second, we must help people learn that worship is not passive but active. Worship is the work of the people directed toward God. We gather on the Lord's Day not so much to receive, but to offer sacrifices of praise (see Heb. 13:15-16). We acknowledge what God has done for us and is doing for us. Thus, we bless Him, Hymn Him, and offer our gifts to Him, as well as our praise and adoration. We learn to see worship as active participation.

This stance helps us overcome our misconception that the hymns, Scripture reading, and the offering are merely the preliminaries before the preaching or that the ordinances are something we tack on at the beginning or end of the service.

Third, we need to understand that Christian worship is primarily rooted in an event, the Christ event in which God revealed Himself as our loving and compassionate creator and redeemer. Worship is a response to the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Hymns, confessions of faith, doxologies, sermons, Scripture readings, symbols, and benedictions all grown out of God's ultimatum revelation in Christ. Our response of remembrance, thanksgiving, prayer, praise, and proclamation must be congregational, participative reenactments of the Christ event.

Fourth, we need to emphasize that worship is primarily spiritual and symbolic. Worship is only possible in and by the Holy Spirit, who prompts our love and praise of God. At the same time, we need to rediscover the wealth of resources available to help us highlight those symbols handed down to us by Christ, the apostles, and the experiences of the saints of the ages. Much that is dismissed as form and tradition can be rebaptized by the Spirit to shape our congregational worship.

Last, we must help people realize the need to prepare for worship. Worship leaders need to structure services to have coherent movement that is theologically, biblically, and thematically informed. Worshipers will gather not just to sit, listen, and be informed, but to exalt God and to affirm their faith.

What Are the Effects of Renewal in Our Worship?

Our churches will refocus an emphasis on the importance of all things being done for the glory of God (see 1 Cor. 10:31). We will move away from our individualistic and secular emphases to concentrate on the whole body so that all things will be done for mutual edification (see 1 Cor. 14:26). This mutual upbuilding of the body involves the development of mutual relationships (see 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3ff). It takes place as each member, enhanced by congregational participation, ministers the gift bestowed to him or her by the Holy Spirit. Edification takes place in sharing with, and thus mutually receiving from, others. True worship produces such interaction and freedom of the Holy Spirit.

When genuine worship takes place, not only is the entire body enhanced and built up, but the mission and outreach of the church is strengthened. Notice that in Isaiah 6:1-8, after the prophet had authentically encountered God, three things resulted: (1) a recognition of who God is; (2) a realization of the need for repentance and forgiveness; (3) a renewed desire for mission.

The people of God who have worshiped their God and who have been mutually strengthened are prepared to enter the world to touch lives, meet needs, counsel hurts, speak to injustices, and by life and witness proclaim the saving message of the gospel. Reaching people and exalting God are hardly in conflict. As a matter of fact, real outreach is prefaced upon genuine worship.

An emphasis among Southern Baptists is the theme "Let's All Go to Church". Let us pray for renewal in our worship and our outreach mission. And as we all go to church, let's focus our attention on exalting God, affirming our faith, and reaching people.



Lordship and the Nature of Saving Faith

Ernest Reisinger

Just over four hundred years ago, late in October, a young Augustinian monk, professor of theology and pastor in Wittenberg, Germany, in the fire of his zeal for Christian truth, nailed ninety-five these to the door of the Castle Church. He had left the study of law and entered the priesthood, seeking to be justified before God. His name was Martin Luther. As a result of studying the Scriptures, he discovered the biblical truths that had long been covered and obscured by the ritual and rubble of Rome. One of the great truths then restored to the church was justification by faith alone.

The Reality of False Faith

The issue before us in the Lordship debate is not a denial of justification by faith alone, but rather a perversion of that doctrine. Nonlordship teaching often excludes the possibility of spurious faith. However, religious deception is the worst kind of deception because of its eternal consequences. We must distinguish properly between justifying faith and spurious or counterfeit faith.

The Bible very clearly warns against spurious faith. I wish, therefore, to direct attention to its warnings and note some differences between spurious and true believers. I intend to cite biblical cases of spurious faith, showing that the Scriptures teach the existence of belief which is not saving faith. I plan also to define true faith and give biblical examples of that faith which savingly joins one to Jesus Christ for all eternity.

Non-lordship teachers ignore and deny this truth. Despite protestations to the contrary, non-lordship salvation has a faith which is little more than mental assent.

With your Bible in hand, study some of the differences which follow.

There is a hope that shall perish ("the hope of the hypocrite shall perish," Job 8:13) and also a hope that "maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5). Likewise, there is a faith which saves and a faith which damns. The need to distinguish between the two is vital for the contemporary Church and is central in the Lordship controversy.

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, *but* the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. But you will not come to me..." (John 5:39,40). These searching passages have a very real application to our church membership today. I confess that I pick up my pen with feeling of sorrow and anxiety. The church is filled with many, many members who give no biblical evidence of real conversion. There is rampant an Athenian love of religious novelty and excitement which is coupled with a morbid distaste for anything old and regular; i.e. for the well-beaten paths of our forefathers.

What is the difference between spurious faith and justifying faith; between false believers and true believers? Many differences could be considered, but the following four serve to separate the wheat from the chaff, the genuine from the counterfeit.

The Differences Between False and True Faith

The first difference is that spurious believers want Christ, but *not without exception*. They want the grace of Christ, but not the government of Christ. They resemble the prodigal son who wanted his father's goods but not his father's government. They desire the benefits of the Cross without bowing to the implications of the Crown. They want to go to heaven, but not by the narrow way that leads there. They desire the free gift of eternal life, but will not receive it with empty hands. Yes, they want Christ, but not without exception. They want Christ and their other lovers also. They want to be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from sin itself. But our Lord came to save from sin. This is clear from the very first chapter of the New Testament. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Not *in* their sins but *from* their sins. Jesus is not some mere hell insurance policy. He is a Saviour from sin and its consequences--not just the consequences, but sin itself.

True saving faith wants Christ *without exception*. This is illustrated by our Lord's parables in Matthew 13. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. 13:44). "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking godly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45,46). The treasure and the pearl represent Christ; and saving faith wants Him *without exception*.

The second difference between spurious believers and true believers is that true faith wants Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures; that is, as the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). As Mediator, Christ has three offices: Prophet, Priest and King of His church.

As Priest, Christ procures pardon and peace by His sacrifice on the cross and maintains peace by His intercession for His sheep. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9,10)

As Prophet, Christ is wisdom, teacher, and counselor in all things.

As anointed King, Christ rules and reigns over the true believer in all things and protects him from all his enemies.

Spurious believers want Christ only as a Priest to procure pardon and peace, but not as a Prophet to instruct them or as a King to rule over them. We are not saved however, by one of the offices of Christ, but by Him. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). If we have Him, we must have Him *in all of His offices* as He set forth in the Bible.

The Westminster Divines and our Baptist fathers taught these truths to Christians and their children; however, you will never hear it from a non-lordship teacher. It seems that they have little or no respect for what the Holy Spirit taught our fathers. They seem only to be concerned about our Lord's priestly office. If they were straight on the following questions and answers (found in the *Larger Catechism*) they would never, never teach so as to separate the offices of Christ; that is, His Lordship from His Saviour-hood.

Q. *Why was our Mediator called Jesus?*

A. Our Mediator was called Jesus, because he saveth his people from their sins.

Q. *Why was our Mediator called Christ?*

A. Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; and so set

apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his church, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.

Q. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?

A. Christ executes the office of a prophet, in his revealing to the church, in all ages, by his Spirit and word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning intercession for them.

Q. How does Christ execute the office of a king?

A. Christ executes the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.

The third difference is that spurious believers never close with Christ and all the inconveniences that follow (and believe me there are some!). They want Christ but they have never done what Jesus commanded, that is, *counted the cost* (Luke 14:25-33). Every serious Christian knows that the Christian life is not a gospel hayride. All is not "happy, happy, happy" or "jolly, jolly, jolly" all the time. The language of the Christian life is also "I war", "I fight", "I wrestle", "I strive".

Jesus was honest about this at the outset of the invitation. Any serious study of Luke 9 and 14 will underscore just how honest Jesus was in inviting men to follow Him (cf. Luke 9:23).

Another example of how honest Jesus was with would-be followers is found in Luke 9:57,58. The man in this place said, "Lord, I will follow you wherever you go." Now most modern evangelism would have signed him up immediately and baptized him the same day and he would have been teaching Sunday school two weeks later. But what did Jesus do? He was honest. He said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This is not a very good way to get decisions but it is honest. "And he said to them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me""(Luke 9:23). Jesus was honest at the outset. This invitation is not for some second work of grace or second act of consecration. It is the initial invitation for salvation.

True faith wants Christ even with all the inconveniences that necessarily follow. It costs to be a Christian. I am not talking about the price of redemption--that is infinite. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. I am talking about what it costs to live a Christian life. It costs you nothing to *become* a Christian, but it may cost you everything to be a Christian. The gospel motto is "without money and without price." We are "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Yet, for all that, if a man will be a Christian it will cost him something.

Consider a moment: Here is a blind man sitting by the wayside begging. He asks to have his eyes opened. Will it cost him anything? No. The Saviour would not accept all the gold in the world for the cure. He will freely open his eyes. But when they are opened it will cost that blind man something. Once he has obtained his sight he will be called upon to discharge the duties of one who has eyes. He will not be allowed after that to sit there and beg. If he tries to do so, he will lose the sympathy which is bestowed upon blindness. Now that his eyes are opened he must use them and earn his own bread. It will cost him something, for he will now be conscious of the darkness of the night which he knew nothing of before! And there are sad sights which now he must look upon which never grieved him before,

for often what the eye does not see the heart does not grieve for.

A man cannot gain a faculty except at some expense. He that increases knowledge or the means of gaining it increases both sorrow and duty.

True religion is a costly thing, but it is also a lasting thing. It lasts for life. False religion comes and goes. True regeneration is never repeated and it is the beginning of a life which will know no end, either in time or eternity.

2 Peter 1:10 says, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble."

Dr. John Brown, that great and godly minister and theologian of Edinburgh, Scotland, commenting on this verse said, "If we would prove to the world and to our own hearts that we are the called and elect of God, we must be and do what the called and elect of God are called to be and to do." We could say it another way, that is, if I would prove to the world and to my own heart that I am a Christian I must be and do what Christians are meant to be and do--and that will cost something.

The fourth difference between spurious and true believers is that the spurious believer's and true believers is that the spurious believer's heart is not changed and, therefore, his faith is not operative. Simon Magus *believed and was baptized*, but his heart was not right in the sight of God. He was in the gall of bitterness and Peter told him he would perish with his money--yet, he believed and was baptized (Acts 8:13,21). True faith is operative, purifying the heart (Acts 15:8,9).

Conclusion

In summary:

1. Saving faith wants Christ without exception.
2. Saving faith receives Christ in all of His offices--as Prophet, Priest and King.
3. Saving faith receives Christ and all the inconveniences that follow.
4. Saving faith is operative, purifying the heart.

None of these things are true of spurious faith.

We must properly distinguish between justifying faith and spurious faith. The non-lordship teaching fails miserably on this point. The consequences of remaining in deception are too enormous to neglect self-examination. There is a faith which will not save, and men must be warned of its fatal consequences. We are justified by faith alone, but true faith has distinguishing traits. That faith which is alone is not the kind of faith which justifies. Because of the danger of being deceived the great apostle told the Corinthians to examine themselves as to whether they were in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). It would be well if all those on our church rolls would do likewise.

John, in his little epistle, gives some tests of eternal life. They might be called the birthmarks of the second birth. One of these birthmarks is belief or faith. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1). This saving belief is in the whole Christ, the Christ of the Bible--the only Mediator who right now is Prophet, Priest and King of His church.

This saving faith must reach the whole man. It must reach his mind--that is what he thinks with. It must reach his emotions, or affections--that is what he feels with. It must reach his will--that is what he decides with and acts with. Whatever true religion is, it cannot be less than this:

Right thinking in relationship to God

Right feeling in relationship to God

Right acting in relationship to God

The non-lordship teachers seem to miss this salient point. They settle for a change of mind even though it does not necessarily cause a change of conduct and a change of direction. They say nothing about a changed will. Hear the explanation of repentance from one of their manuals: "Any teaching that demands a change of conduct toward either God or man for salvation is to add works or human effort to faith, and this contradicts all scripture and is an accursed message" (*Handbook to Personal Evangelism*, by Stanford, Seymour, and Streib).

No, no, saving faith is more than intellectual assent to historical facts of the gospel. We can learn religious facts without the Spirit. We can learn biblical facts just the same as we can learn math or history. The non-lordship teaching gives a false hope because it is based on man-centered evangelism and gives a false invitation that does not include evangelical repentance.

First, this saving belief is revealed and applied by the Holy Spirit in regeneration (John 3:3). Second, this belief must be exercised by the sinner in his response to the Saviour. Third, this belief is apparent in its fruit--repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20,21). Are you a true or spurious believer?

James Petigru Boyce was the principal founder of the first Southern Baptist Seminary where he also taught systematic theology. His chief mentor as a student was Charles Hodge at Princeton Seminary. The following descriptions of spurious faith are taken from pp. 389-92 of Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology*.

Historical Faith

This is mere intellectual belief of the truths taught in the Scriptures as historical facts. There was such a person as Jesus, who being the Son of God, wrought out salvation and has now commanded all men to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Such was the faith of Simon Magus, Acts 8:13-24; the case of Judas also in one of bare historical faith. But true Saving Faith is a work of the heart, such as is manifest from the following passages: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37). "Believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:9,10).

Temporary or Delusive Faith

This has many marks of true Saving Faith. It is not only an intellectual reception of the historical facts, but a joyful acceptance of them. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).

The evidence of Temporary Faith will soon appear. It lacks the following characteristics of Saving Faith and may be distinguished from it:

1. Continuous in trusting Christ, and in devotion to Him and His service.
2. Desire to be useful in the work of Christ.
3. Attendance to Christian Duty.
4. Love of Prayer and the Word of God, and with His people for worship.
5. Devoted love to the children of God as such.
6. Progress in knowledge of self and sin and of Christ as a Saviour.
7. Progress in loving holiness and hating sin, with increased conviction of, and humility concerning sinfulness.

Since Dr. Boyce is biblically correct in stating that temporary faith and delusive faith lack these seven things, the question that should concern every serious person is: Am I in possession of true Saving Faith?



An Encouragement to Use Catechisms

Tom J. Nettles

Many contemporaries have a deep-seated suspicion of catechisms. In our own Baptist denomination, many would consider the words "Baptist catechism" as mutually exclusive. A popular misconception is that catechisms are used in times and places where inadequate views of conversion predominate or the fires of evangelism have long since turned to white ash. If the Bible is preached, they continue, no catechism is necessary; catechisms tend to produce mere intellectual assent where true heart religion is absent. This concern reflects a healthy interest for the experiential side of true Christianity. Concern for conversion and fervor, however, should never diminish one's commitment to the individual truths of Christianity nor the necessity of teaching them in a full and coherent manner.

In fact, some who profess the Christian faith are so experience-oriented that their view of spirituality makes them antagonistic to precise doctrine. Any attempt to inculcate systematic arrangement of truth is considered either divisive or carnal. Such convictions may be held in all sincerity and may gain apparent support from selected facts, but suspicion of catechisms as a legitimate tool for teaching God's Word cannot be justified historically, biblically, or practically.

History Commends the Usefulness of Catechisms

The early church was painfully familiar with the apostasy of professing Christians. Persecution and the continued power of heathen worship practices caused many to lapse and prompted the early church to develop methods of instructing apparent converts before baptism. The period of instruction and catechizing served two purposes: it allowed the candidate (catechumenate) to decide if he still wanted to submit to Christian baptism and gave the church opportunity to discern (as far as human observation can do these kinds of things) the genuineness of his, or her, conversion. Then, after engaging in a period of fasting and prayer with the church, the candidates were baptized. This use of catechisms served as a safeguard for the purity of the church.

Men such as Tertullian and Augustine served as catechists within the church. Julian the Apostate (ca. 360) so feared the effectiveness of this enterprise that he closed all Christian schools and places of public literature and forbade the instructing of youth.

With the union of church and state by the end of the fourth century and the gradual development of infant baptism the nature of catechetical instruction changed. The procedure of pre-baptismal catechetical instruction shifted more and more to after-the-fact instruction in preparation for confirmation. In many places it vanished entirely. Mass christianization of barbarian tribes in the middle ages revitalized the catechetical idea. Charlemagne insisted that each baptized person should know at least the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. This concern then extended to the children of such Christianized tribes. Though minimal, instruction was necessary, and the guarantee for it came from godparents who themselves were required to know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. As confirmation developed in significance, examination upon the basic points of Christian doctrine became a normal procedure. This kind of practice has led to the impression that catechisms substitute for conversion in some traditions.

The golden Age of catechisms emerged in the Reformation. Both Luther and Calvin placed high priority on instruction by catechetical method and considered the success of the Reformation as virtually dependent on the faithfulness of Protestants to this process. In 1548, Calvin wrote Edward VI's protector Somerset: "Believe my Lord, that the Church of God shall never be conserved without catechism, for it is as the seed to be kept that the good grain

perish not but that it may increase from age to age. Wherefore if you desire to build a work of continuance to endure long, and which should not shortly fall into decay, cause that the children in their young age be instructed in a good catechism."

The Heidelberg Catechism and the *Westminster Catechism* have had the most significant impact on Reformed Protestantism. The former, dating from 1562, begins with two questions which establish the format for the remainder of the document.

Q. 1. *What is thy only comfort in life and in death?*

A. That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto him.

Q. 2. *How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou in this comfort mayest live and die happy?*

A. Three things: First, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.

The three parts of the catechism which follow are entitled "Of Man's Misery," "Of Man's Redemption," and "Of Thankfulness." Within these sections full question and answer expositions are given of the Fall, the Apostles' Creed, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Perseverance, and Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

Hercules Collins, a leading English Baptist of the seventeenth century, adopted the *Heidelberg Catechism* as the basis for his 1680 publication *Orthodox Catechism*. Collins, a Baptist, felt that this virtual duplication of the Heidelberg Catechism should strengthen the usefulness of his work, "hoping an Athenian Spirit is in none of you, but do believe that an old Gospel (to you who have the sweetness of it) will be more acceptable than a new." Part of his purpose was to demonstrate basic unity with the larger Protestant community.

Although literally hundreds of catechisms were produced in English in the seventeenth century, the most influential catechisms were those that arose from the Westminster Assembly, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The Shorter Catechism especially influenced Baptist life, as it formed the basis for Keach's (or *The Baptist*) Catechism and subsequently Spurgeon's Catechism. In America, the Philadelphia Association catechism and the Charleston Association catechism were duplicates of Keach's catechism. Richard Furman used it faithfully and effectively.

Several principles appeared to govern the theory of catechisms. One, many catechists believed that catechisms of different levels should be produced. Luther had published two as did the Scottish divine Craig and the Puritan John Owen (*Two Short Catechisms*). Richard Baxter had three, suited for childhood, youth, and mature age. The Westminster Assembly's two catechisms are well known. Henry Jessey, another of the leading early Baptists, had three catechisms, all bound together, one of which contained only four questions: What man was, is, may be, and must be. John A. Broadus includes sections of "advanced questions" at the end of each respective section in the body of his catechism. This graduated difficulty in catechism rests on the theory that the earlier the stamping on the mind, the more indelible the result.

Two, exact memory is generally considered important. The power of words to substantiate reality enforces the necessity of some precision at this point. "I serve a precise God," said Richard Rogers. Luther instructed those teaching the Small Catechism "to avoid changes or variation in the text and wording." We should teach these things,

he continued, "in such a way that we do not alter a single syllable or recite the catechism differently from year to year."

Exact head knowledge, however, is obviously not the end of catechetical instruction. Rather, catechizing aims ultimately at the eyes of understanding, heart knowledge. Even in the Westminster Assembly some were concerned that "people will come to learn things by rote, and answer it as a parrot but not understand the thing." The design of the catechism is, under God, to chase the darkness from a sinner's understanding, so that he may be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and freely embrace him in forgiveness of sin. John Bunyan specifically wrote his catechism, "Instruction for the Ignorant," that God might bless it to the awakening of many sinners, and the salvation of their souls by faith in Jesus Christ. The major purpose of Henry Jessey's "Catechism for Babes" was to give instruction concerning how God could forgive those who "deserve death, and God's curse," and could still "be honoured in thus forgiving, naughty ones as we are."

Henry Fish, an American Baptist, screwed in tightly the application of each section of his catechism by a poignant rhetorical question sealing discussion of each doctrine. For example, "Are **you** a believer, or does the wrath of God abide on you for unbelief?"

A catechism written by the English Baptist John Sutcliffe pinpoints this same concern as the goal of catechetical instruction.

Q. To conclude: what do you learn from the catechism you have now been repeating?

A. I learn that the affairs of my soul are of the greatest importance, and ought to employ my chief concern.

That this has indeed been the result of catechetical instruction quite often is a happy fact. Luther Rice, that great early promoter of missions in America, said this in reflecting on his conversion:

After finding myself thus happy in the Lord, I began to reflect in a day or two, whether touching this reconciliation with God, there was anything of Christ in it or not! It then opened very dearly and sweetly to my view that all this blessed effect and experience arose distinctly out of the efficiency of the statement made by Christ. That I was indebted wholly to him for it all, and indeed the whole of that luminous system of divinity drawn out in the Westminster Catechism, opened on my view with light, and beauty, and power. This I had been taught to repeat, when a child. I then felt and still feel glad that I had been so taught.

A charming reminiscence of one of the children Furman catechized gives a clear picture of the importance he attached to this process and these doctrines. A 1926 edition of *In Royal Service* quotes the remembrance a grandchild had of her grandmother's experience under Furman.

We had no Sabbath school then, but we had the Baptist Catechism, with which we were as familiar as with the Lord's Prayer. At our quarterly seasons, we children of the congregation repeated the Baptist Catechism standing, in a circle round the font. We numbered from sixty to a hundred. The girls standing at the south of the pulpit, the boys meeting them in the center from the north, Dr. Furman would, in his majestic, winning manner, walk down the pulpit steps and with book in hand, commence asking questions, beginning with the little ones (very small indeed some were, but well taught and drilled at home). We had to memorize the whole book, for none knew which question would fall to them. I think I hear at this very moment the dear voice of our pastor saying, "A little louder, my child," and then the trembling, sweet voice would be raised a little too loud. It was a

marvel to visitors on these occasions, the wonderful self-possession and accuracy manifested by the whole class. This practice was of incalculable benefit, for when it pleased God to change our hearts, and when offering ourselves to the church for membership, we knew what the church doctrines meant and were quite familiar with answering questions before the whole congregation, and did not quake when pastor or deacon or anyone else asked what we understood by Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification. Oh, no; we had been well taught...What a pity that such a course of instruction has been abandoned.

Another kind of understanding was necessary also. Couching profound truth of the Great "I Am" in language digestible and understandable for children takes great discipline and concentration. Henry Jessey recognized a deficiency at this point in some of the earlier catechisms for children in that some of the answers contained Latin and Greek phrases. Jessey "desired to see one so plain and easie in the expressions, as they the very Babes, that can speak but stammeringly, and are of very weak capacities, might understand what they say."

John A. Broadus felt the same tension when writing his "Catechism of Bible Teaching." Reflecting on finishing Lesson 1 entitled "God," Broadus said, "It is, of course, an extremely difficult task to make questions and answers about the existence and attributes of the Divine Being, that shall be intelligible to children, adequate as the foundation for future thinking, and correct as far as they go." Those three guidelines should serve well to judge any catechism.

Baptist catechisms have existed virtually since the appearance of modern-day Baptists in the seventeenth century. Typical of early Baptist commitment to catechizing is an admonition that appears in the circular letter of 1777 from the Baptist ministers and messengers assembled at Oakham in Rutlandshire, England.

Our confession of faith and our catechism for the instruction of our young people, are published to the world; and from these glorious principles we hope you will never depart...At present, blessed be God, we believe there is no apparent apostasy in our ministers and people from the glorious principles we profess; but, at the same time, we must in great plainness and faithfulness tell you, that catechizing of children is most sadly neglected, both in private families and in public congregations...

Our honoured brethren, the ministers at Bristol, have lately encouraged the publication of two editions of our catechism,...and we do most earnestly entreat you to furnish yourselves with this excellent compendium of true divinity, and that you would teach it diligently to your children in private, and desire your pastors to instruct them, at least for the summer season, in public.

Cathcart's *The Baptist Encyclopedia* encourages "parents to employ the Catechism in their own homes" because "this neglected custom of the past should be revived in every Baptist family in the world."

Southern Baptists developed catechisms as valuable tools for the religious education and evangelization of slaves. In 1848, Robert Ryland published "A Scripture Catechism for the Instruction of Children and Servants" and, in 1857, E.T. Winkler published *Notes and Questions for the Oral Instruction of Colored People*. Each of these catechisms contains fifty-two lessons, one for each Lord's Day of the year.

In 1863, when the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was founded, one of its first publications was *A Catechism of Bible Doctrine*, by J.P. Boyce. Within a four-month period in 1864, then thousand of these were printed and distributed. In 1879, Southern Baptists requested J.L. Dagg to write "a

catechism...containing the substance of the Christian religion, for the instruction of children and servants..." Evidently this catechism was never completed. When the Southern Baptist Convention was considering the reestablishment of the Sunday School Board in 1891, the first new project it proposed was the publication of a catechism by John A. Broadus. This was printed and used widely and advantageously.

Summary and Conclusion

Catechisms have served in several capacities historically. During the early centuries of Christian history they were used for prebaptismal instruction. Later, after infant baptism began to become prominent, they were used to educate the masses baptized in infancy. Charlemagne in particular arranged that catechetical instruction should be given in his era of embarrassing ignorance.

During the Reformation, catechisms met several important and pressing needs. As a type of personalized confession, they helped establish clearly the distinguishing doctrines considered paramount by the reformers. Also, their polemical power assisted in the task of bringing a corrective cordial to the deceptive spiritual sickness propagated by Roman Catholicism. Additionally, they were effective in teaching biblical truth as an ongoing enterprise in cities and countries that adopted the Reformation. Puritans and their heirs utilized catechisms as an evangelistic tool. Baptists, including Southern Baptists, produced scores of catechisms for use in this variety of ways.

We see, then, that like all good ideas, catechisms are subject to abuse, and their evil lives after them. We should not, however, let the good be interred with their bones, but resurrect it as an effective instrument for a new day of Reformation.

[A [future article](#) will develop the biblical rationale for catechisms.]

[\[To Part 2\]](#)



"Those who do away with Christian doctrine are...the worst enemies of Christian living."

Charles Spurgeon



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The Tenth Southern Baptist Founders Conference

Bill Ascol

On the two hundredth anniversary marking the launching of the modern missionary movement, it was fitting that the Tenth Annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Founders Conference should address the theme "Missions and Evangelism: The whole gospel for the whole world." The conference was a tremendous blessing to the more than one hundred fifty persons in attendance. This year's meeting featured a distinctive South African Flavor, with Mr. John Wilton and Mr. Martin Holdt addressing the conference. Mr. Wilton, who now resides in the U.S.A. and has far-reaching itinerant evangelistic ministry, formerly lived and pastored in South Africa. He is a past president of the Baptist Union of South Africa. Mr. Holdt pastors the Emmanuel Baptist Church near Johannesburg, South Africa. He also is the editor of *Reformation Africa South*, a journal not unlike the Founders Journal.

Mr. Wilton opened the conference with a stirring challenge from Psalm 27, imploring those in attendance "to know God and to worship Him." Mr. Holdt addressed the conference three times, on the doctrine of eternal punishment, the necessity of intercessory prayer, and the doctrine of justification by faith, respectively. Each of these sermons was mightily zeal. The doctrine of eternal punishment asserts the holy majesty of God and the awful reality of the endless misery which awaits those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. Intercessory prayer is necessary because only God is able to supply the great need of the hour through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Holdt asked, "Have we forgotten to pray?" The doctrine of justification of faith is a gloriously liberating doctrine which must be preached freely to sinners.

The remaining speakers addressed an array of themes which fit very nicely together to form a very fragrant bouquet of missionary and evangelistic emphases. Mr. Bob Selph, pastor of the Miller Valley Baptist Church in Prescott, Arizona, forcefully demonstrated that the doctrine of unconditional election is a guarantee of missionary success. After drawing five deduction from Acts 13:48 regarding the manner of our God in saving sinners, Mr. Selph ran the length and breadth of Holy Scripture proving that the doctrine of unconditional election is a great impetus to missionary and evangelistic activity. He closed his message by setting forth seven motives designed to answer the question, "If unconditional election be true, then why preach the gospel to sinners?"

Dr. Fred Malone, pastor of the Heritage Baptist church in Crowley, Texas, presented a paper on the theme, "Believer's Baptism by Immersion." Dr. Malone is specially qualified to speak on this subject inasmuch as he was raised in a Southern Baptist church, later became a Presbyterian, then studied his way back into believer's baptism. Focusing on Matthew 28:18-20 and Romans 6:1-5, Dr. Malone addressed the mode, meaning, and proper subjects of baptism. His presentation was forceful, and yet was undertaken with a spirit of sensitivity and compassion for those dear brethren who might not agree with his position.

Dr. Timothy George, Dean of Beeson Divinity School on the campus of Samford University, spoke twice on the life and labors of William Carey. Dr. George undertook his mission with an animated scholarship which was both refreshing and informative. He observed that Carey, as well as those who joined him in his burden to take the gospel to the heathen, were evangelical Calvinists. The doctrines of grace, rather than hindering these men, emboldened them to look unto the fields and see them white even unto harvest, pray the Lord of the harvest that he might send forth laborers into his harvest, and then send one from among their midst into the foreign field.

The name Lottie Moon is practically synonymous with missionary zeal for most Southern Baptists. Dr. Tom Nettles, professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, gave an insightful biography

of the life, labors, and legacy of Charlotte Diggs Moon. Having demonstrated the sacrificial spirit which dominated the missionary labors of Lottie Moon, Dr. Nettles challenged his listeners to consider the call of God to the foreign fields of service.

Mr. Jim Gables, pastor of the Oakland Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, drew a portrait of the evangelist from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Mr. Gables, an able gospel expositor in his own right, is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on the immortal classic by Bunyan.

The conference closed with a vigorous challenge from Mr. R.F. Gates. Mr. Gates is an itinerant evangelist who serves as an elder in the Heritage Baptist Church in Shreveport, Louisiana. He called attention to our Lord's dealings with the demoniac of Gadara. God used this message to send everyone away with a focused zeal and a burning conviction to obey the Lord of the church and be witnesses for him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Eleventh Annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference is scheduled to convene once again on the campus of Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama July 27th through 30th, 1993 (D.V.). The conference theme will be "Ministers and Ministry." Dr. John MacArthur, senior pastor of Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, will be the keynote speaker. Inquiries may be addressed to:

The Southern Baptist Founders Conference
P.O. Box 150931
Cape Coral, FL 33915



A Word to the Unconverted

Charles H. Spurgeon

Please notice, dear friends, that in the thirteenth verse [of Romans 10] we have the way of salvation set before us in the plainest terms: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember well when I lived on that verse for many months. I longed for salvation; I could not see that there was any way of hope for me; I thought that I must be left out, that I was too sinful, or too hard, or too something or other, so that others might be saved, but I should not be. But when I read this verse, I did what I ask you to do, I caught at it; it seemed like a life-line thrown to a sinking man. I clung to it, and it became a life-bouy to me: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ah!" thought I, "I do call on that blessed name, I will call on that glorious name; if I perish, I will never cease to invoke that sacred name." An invocation of the name of God, a trusting in god, and a consequent calling upon God and acknowledgment of God, this it is that saves the soul.

But I must get you to notice these words a little more in detail. There is here, first, *a wide word*, a *very wide word*: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?" "Whosoever." I have heard that, when a person is making his will, if he wishes to leave all he has to one person, say to his wife, if he just says so, that is the best thing he can do; but he had better not go into details, and begin making a list of what he is leaving, because he will probably leave something or other out. Now, in order to make this will of God very distinct, he does not go into any detail, but he just says, "Whosoever." That means the black man, and the red man, and the yellow man, and the white man. It means the rich man, and the poor man, and the man who is not a man. It means everybody of every sort, and those who are of no sort at all, or of all sorts put together. "Whosoever." That includes me, I am sure; but I am equally certain that it includes you, you in the aisles who were never here before, you who are quite unknown in London, you who are a stranger and a foreigner, whoever you may be. It is much better to have it put so, without going into detail, because otherwise somebody might be left out. I have often thought that, if I had read in Scripture that "If Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved," I should not have felt half as sure of salvation as I do now, because I should have concluded that there might have been somebody else of that name, and very likely there is, and I should have said, "Surely it did not mean me;" but when the Lord says "Whosoever," I cannot get out of that circle. It is a big net that seems to entangle all men in its meshes. "Whosoever." If I call upon the name of the Lord, if you call upon the name of the Lord, if the man who lies upstairs a-dying calls upon the name of the Lord, we shall be saved. What a wide word that "whosoever" is!

And then, next, what *an easy word* we have here! "Whosoever shall *call* upon the name of the Lord." Anybody can call upon the name of the Lord. Everybody understands what it is to call "Hi there!" Have you not often used such a call as that? And if you have been in distress or danger, have you never called, "Help, help, help?" Very well, he who can thus call, let him call upon God, invoke his help, clamor for this mercy, crave his pity. If he does that in a believing way, as we shall have to show you, trusting that God will hear him, he shall be saved. So there is no difficulty here that wants a doctor of divinity to explain; the truth is put mainly in monosyllabic words: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is as plain as a pikestaff. Oh, that you might see it, and begin to call upon the name of the Lord by earnest prayer!

But here is another word, *a sure word*: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall* be saved." There is no "if" here; no "maybe" here; but a glorious "*shall*." Our shalls and wills are poor, puny things; but God's "shall" is firm as the eternal mountains. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," as surely as there is a God. The Lord has made no mistake; he will not revoke his declaration by changing his mind. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*." Oh, that many would call upon his name...and find immediate salvation, which will last them throughout life, and throughout eternity, for "shall be saved" reaches a very long way,

even throughout the eternal ages that are yet to come.



News

Southern Baptist Response to Hurricane Andrew

Before the Federal Government, National Guard, Red Cross or Military responded to the devastation that was left in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, Southern Baptists were on the scene with food, supplies, and medical assistance. Most importantly, all the efforts were put forth very openly in the name of Christ. Between 50-75,000 meals a day were served by the Florida Baptist Convention's Disaster Relief Teams. These were assisted by volunteers from more than a dozen other state conventions. Similar efforts took place in Louisiana where Southern Baptists from 6 states assisted by, among other things, preparing 190,000 meals for storm victims during the first 2 weeks of the aftermath.

Twenty-four Southern Baptist pastors in South Florida suffered damage due to the storm. Some lost their complete libraries. Grace Baptist Church of Cape Coral, FL has responded by sending each of these men John Dagg's *Manual of Theology* and *Manual of Church Order*, along with other books. Each has also been offered a complimentary subscription to the *Founders Journal*.

A New Journal

The *Baptist Review of Theology* is a semi-annual journal which is published by the faculty of the Central Baptist Seminary of Ontario. Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin is the editor. The goal of this new journal is "to provide a forum for theological reflection and discussion from an evangelical Baptist perspective." Cost is \$18.00 per year. For more information write:

The *Baptist Review of Theology*
Central Baptist Seminary
6 Gormley Industrial Avenue
P.O. Box 28
Gormley, Ontario
Canada. LOH 1G0

Letter of Appreciation

The following letter was sent to the SBFC Planning Committee.

This letter is written to you to express my sincere appreciation for your hard work and dedication to the furtherance of the gospel through a Southern Baptist conference that promotes the faith of our founders. While I realize this gathering is primarily for pastors, I feel it is something through which all believers can derive great benefit. I want to express some of the benefits I have received:

As this is my second year to attend the conference, I arrived with a spirit of anticipation that I would be greatly blessed as I had been in the prior year. Not to my surprise I came away with a feeling of rejoicing in my heart, a renewed mind, and an uplifted soul. I can truly say with the Psalmist, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Time after time, the men of God ushered me into the throne room and I worshipped at His feet. What a marvelous blessing!

While I ponder and contemplate the messages at hand, I find myself falling on my knees and crying out... "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there by any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I examine myself and find there to be many wicked ways within me. Praise His name that He is a merciful and forgiving God!

*Although my soul has been thrilled, my heart is weighted down with the heaviest of burdens and feels as if it would at any moment break into a thousand pieces as I think of all the lost and dying souls in the world! It seems too great a task, an overwhelming mission--nevertheless, my Lord has commanded me to go and that is what I **must** do. The time spent last week has reinforced this in my mind and heart. O that I would be a faithful servant to do His will!*

It seems an incredible and amazing thing to think that just a year ago I was living in darkness without even a will to go on living! Yet today I sit here writing to you having seen the brilliant splendor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly the Lord is my light and my salvation without whom there would be no hope. It is my greatest desire to share the joy of this light with others. Your endeavors this past week have been mighty in the promotion of the Kingdom of God. I will use my experiences to implore others to come and hear the proclamation of God's word.

Finally, I am writing this letter to encourage you in the faith, to be strong and not to grow weary in well doing. We, as the flock, must realize that our shepherds do become discouraged and weary at times. I will lift your name before the Lord that He would give you strength, wisdom and boldness in your labors on behalf of Him.

-L. G.



Book Reviews

God's Riches: A Workbook on the Doctrines of Grace By John Benton and John Peet; 1991, 64 pp. Banner of Truth, \$10.95.

Reviewed by [Tom Ascol](#)

Preachers of the Bible know how valuable it is to have their learners "discover" the truths of God's Word for themselves. Secondhand doctrine, like canned corn, is never as sweet, nutritious, or appreciated as that which is homegrown. God's desire always is for our people to be taught by Spirit.

The Spirit performs this ministry when the Word is studied. Personal study, along with receiving the Word preached, is essential for healthy spiritual development. John Benton and John Peet have done a wonderful service for Pastors and serious Christians everywhere with their workbook, *God's Riches*.

Here is a tool that can be used in-group study or privately to help believers understand "Foundation Principles" (The Bible, God and Man--covered in Part One) and "The Doctrines of Grace" (depravity, election, atonement, effectual calling, and perseverance--covered in Part Two). It is a true workbook with questions that are designed to be answered in writing.

The format is simple and the language is clear. A variety of line art is included which makes the pages appealing to the eye. More than a dozen valuable quotations from men like Spurgeon, Sibbes, Owen, and Luther are interspersed.

This instruction manual ought to have great usefulness in churches who teach the doctrines of grace.

Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life By Donald S. Whitney; 1991, 254 pp. Navpress, \$15.99.

Reviewed by [Roger Ellsworth](#)

Ours is the age of instant gratification and the quick fix. Even Christians have succumbed to the spirit of the times. We want to attain that state frequently referred to as "victorious Christian living" by simply going to a retreat or walking down an aisle.

Don Whitney's book comes as a much needed corrective to this kind of thinking. It reminds us that Christianity is not easy, and if we expect to produce robust Christian character we must get back to what former generations of Christians knew and what we have all but forgotten--discipline.

In his forward, J.I. Packer warns us to prepare for a workout in Whitney's book. And a workout it is! After his opening chapter that tells us why spiritual disciplines are essential, the author takes us through a wide range of disciplines--Bible study, Bible memorization, prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling, and learning.

Each of these chapters features a comprehensive treatment of the biblical teaching on these subjects. Application is carefully made throughout the course of each chapter, but just to make sure he has the hook securely fastened in the reader's jaw, the author concludes each chapter with a very helpful section entitled "More Application."

Because we all have the tendency to start and not finish, Whitney concludes the workout with a chapter on perseverance in the disciplines.

The whole book is a delight to read. It is done in a warm-hearted, winsome fashion that makes us want to practice these disciplines--not out of legalistic obligation but out of love for Christ and out of the desire to be the very best we can be for His glory.

Christian Theology by Millard Erickson; 1985, 1302 pp. Baker, \$39.95.

Reviewed by [Chuck Todd](#)

Millard Erickson, newly appointed Research Professor of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has performed a great service for Evangelicals in writing this systematic theology text. As he states in the preface, "While the textbooks written by Charles Hodge, Augustus Strong, Louis Berkhof, and others served admirably for their day, there was no way they could anticipate and respond to the recent developments in theology and other disciplines. *Christian Theology* represents an attempt to fill that need for our day." It is in this spirit that he proceeds to develop this work, remaining true to orthodoxy while addressing contemporary matters of theology.

The Author shows vast knowledge in numerous areas throughout the book. His basic approach is to provide summaries of significant positions held in the past and present, and then to state his own position by way of critique. Erickson capably engages much of the modern thought which is influencing the Church today. Neo-orthodoxy and process theology are two schools which he critiques from an orthodox perspective. His treatment of aberrant and heretical ideas is not mean-spirited but graciously frank and to the point, following the Apostolic injunction (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

The first chapter, "What is Theology", a well-rounded introduction is given. Theology is biblical, systematic, and relates to the issues of general culture and learning. It must be contemporary (meaning timeless truths being stated in an intelligible way for today's reader), and practical. Theology is not solely an intellectual enterprise; it is the foundation for a God-glorifying life.

What is evident throughout is clearly stated in Part Two: Erickson is firmly convinced of the inerrancy of Scripture. He labels his view, "full inerrancy," and positions it between "absolute" and "limited" inerrancy. This means that the Bible is "fully truthful in all that it affirms" when it is "correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given" (233-34).

The glory of God is the evident theme throughout this work. Erickson's treatment of the doctrine of God certainly reveals his high view of divine sovereignty. Creation and providence are carried out according to the decrees of God which Erickson calls the "plan of God". God's plan is not contingent upon creature cooperation. Rather, it is the blueprint for their free actions. The author writes: "We may define the plan of God as his eternal decision rendering certain all things which shall come to pass" (346). "Despite difficulties in relating divine sovereignty to human freedom, we nonetheless come to the conclusion on biblical grounds that the plan of God is unconditional rather than conditional upon man's choice. There is simply nothing in the Bible to suggest that God chooses humans because of what they are going to do on their own" (356). Erickson identifies his view with that which Warfield called Calvinistic "congruism."

While avowedly Calvinistic in his soteriology, holding firmly to total depravity, unconditional election, and perseverance of the saints, at two points Erickson deviates from the Dortian stream. He makes a stark distinction between effectual calling and regeneration, placing conversion between them in the application of salvation. This ties in with a universal atonement which is effectual to none except those who receive it by faith. He admits that this view is also espoused by Arminians but, nevertheless, believes it to be biblical. A reading of Chapter 28 in J. P. Boyce's *Abstract of Systematic Theology* will provide a helpful critique of the position he espouses.

In light of the modern Lordship controversy, Erickson's views on perseverance deserve to be quoted: "Our understanding of the doctrine of perseverance allows no room for indolence or laxity. It is questionable whether anyone who reasons, 'Now that I am a Christian, I can live as I please,' has really been converted and regenerated. Genuine faith issues instead, in the fruit of the Spirit. Assurance of salvation results from the Holy Spirit's giving evidence that He is at work in the life of the individual. And wherever the Spirit's work results in conviction that one's commitment to Christ is genuine, there is also the certainty on biblical grounds that God will enable the Christian to persist in that relationship" (996-7).

Well-rounded discussion on the nature of the church, ordinances, and last things finish out this volume, leaving the student an overview of Christianity which is both stimulating and thought-provoking. I highly recommend the purchase and use of this volume by pastors, deacons, Sunday school teachers, and laymen alike.



Announcing

Mission 150

*Connecting every Southern Baptist Pastor with the theological
and spiritual heritage of the Southern Baptist Convention.*

1995 marks the sesquicentennial anniversary of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention. In recognition of this historic event, a special anniversary issue of the Founders Journal is being prepared. This anniversary issue will have articles which set forth and evaluate our denomination's theological and spiritual foundations. The goal is to mail a complimentary copy of this issue of the journal to each of the approximately 40,000 Pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Obviously, an undertaking this ambitious cannot become reality without the support and cooperation of many individuals and churches who share the burden to see our historic principles reintroduced to the present generation of Southern Baptists.

If you would like more information on how you can become a part of this bold effort, please write for a prospectus which outlines the plans and the needs. Send you inquiries to:

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